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THE

THEOLOGICAL,

PHILOSOPHICAL AND MISCELLANEOUS

WORKS

OF THE

REV. WILLIAM JONES, M.A. F.R.S.

IN TWELVE VOLUMES.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A SHORT ACCOUNT

OF HIS

LIFE AND WRITINGS.

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SERMON I.

AND THE EARTH BROUGHT FORTH GRASS, AND HERB YIELDING SEED AFTER HIS KIND, AND THE TREE YIELDING FRUIT, WHOSE SEED WAS IN ITSELF; AND GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD. GEN. I. XII.

IF an author, who should undertake to explain the proportion of architecture, were to trouble us with a long preface, to prove that every house we see must have been the work of some man, because no house could possibly build itself, or rise into form by accident; I presume, we should all be of opinion, that he might have spared this part of his labour. It seems equally superfluous to insist, that the structure of nature could not raise itself; the cases being exactly parallel, and

both self-evident to common sense. There is a sort of sense, which pretends to discover, not only that the argument is necessary, but that the proof is deficient. We trust, however, that such sense neither is, nor ever will be common. If there really be such a thing as speculative or philosophical atheism, that doctrine must be the individual point, in which the affectation of wisdom meets the extremity of folly; and it would be loss of time to reason with it. We therefore take it upon the authority of the text, that herbs, trees, fruits and seeds, are the work of God; and the present occasion requires us to consider how, and in what respects, this work is *good*, and displays the wisdom of the great Creator.

The *goodness* ascribed to this part of the creation is evidently not moral but natural: it means, that the several articles of the vegetable kingdom have that sort of goodness of which they are capable; that they are beautiful and perfect in their kinds; wonderful in their growth; sufficient in their powers and properties; and beneficial in their uses. In these capacities we are to consider them; and to observe how the wisdom of the Creator is manifested.

First,

First, in the form and structure of vegetables.

Secondly, in the manner of their growth.

Thirdly, in their natural uses, for meat and medicine.

Fourthly, in their moral uses; for the advancement of human prudence and religious faith.

Herbs and flowers may be regarded by some persons as objects of inferior consideration in philosophy; but every thing must be great which hath God for its author. To him all the parts of nature are equally related. The flowers of the earth can raise our thoughts up to the Creator of the world as effectually as the stars of heaven: and till we make this use of both, we cannot be said to think properly of either. The contemplation of nature should always be seasoned with a mixture of devotion; the highest faculty of the human mind; by which alone contemplation is improved, and dignified, and directed to its proper object. To join these together is the design of our present meeting; and when they are joined, may they never more be put asunder!

In the form and structure of plants, with the provision for their growth and increase,

there is a store of matter which would more than fill a philosophical treatise: I must therefore content myself with tracing some of the outlines of so large a subject.

The first thing which engages the curiosity of man, and tempts him to bestow so much of his labour and attention upon this part of the creation, is the beautiful form and splendid attire of plants. They who practise this labour know how delightful it is. It seems to restore man in his fallen state to a participation of that felicity, which he enjoyed while innocent in Paradise.

When we cast our eyes upon this part of nature, it is first observable that, herbs and trees compose a scene so agreeable to the sight, because they are invested with that green colour, which, being exactly in the middle of the spectrum of the coloured rays of light, is tempered to a mildness which the eye can bear. The other brighter and more simple colours are sparingly bestowed on the flowers of plants; and which, if diffused over all their parts, would have been too glaring, and consequently offensive. The smaller and more elegant parts are adorned with that brightness which attracts the admiration without endangering the sense.

But

But while the eye is delighted with the colouring of a flower, the reason may be still more engaged with the natural use and design of a flower in the œconomy of vegetation. The rudiment of the fruit, when young and tender, requires some covering to protect it; and accordingly, the flower-leaves surround the seat of fructification; when the sun is warm, they are expanded by its rays, to give the infant-fruit the benefit of the heat: to forward its growth when the sun sets, and the cold of the evening prevails, the flower-leaves naturally close, that the air of the night may not injure the seed-vessel. As the fructification advances, and the changes of the air are no longer hurtful, the flower-leaves have answered their end, and so they wither and fall away. How elegant therefore, as well as apposite, is that allusion in the gospel; *I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these**: for the flower, which is the glory of the lily and other plants, is literally and physically a raiment for the clothing of the seed-vessel! And a raiment it is, whose texture surpasses all the laboured productions of art for the clothing of an

* Matt. vi, 29.

eastern monarch. The finest works of the loom and the needle, if examined with a microscope, appear so rude and coarse, that a savage might be ashamed to wear them: but when the work of God in a flower is brought to the same test, we see how fibres, too minute for the naked eye, are composed of others still more minute; and they of others; till the primordial threads or first principles of the texture are utterly undiscernible; while the whole substance presents a celestial radiance in its colouring, with a richness superior to silver and gold; as if it were intended for the clothing of an angel. The whole creation does not afford a more splendid object for minute examination than the leaves and filaments of flowers; even of some flowers which look obscure, and promise little or nothing to the naked eye.

But besides this richness of substance and colour, there is an elegance of *design* in the whole form and disposition of a plant, which human artists, in ornamental works, are always studious to imitate. Their leaves, and branches and flowers, are thrown about with that ease, and turned into beautiful lines, so as to charm the eye with a variety of flexure, and

and convince us that all the excellence of art must take its pattern from nature.

The parts generally observable in plants, are a root, a stalk, branches, leaves, flowers, fruit and seeds, succeeding each other in their order, and all seeming necessary to one another. But under the direction of divine wisdom, vegetable life is carried on in every possible form, and the end of fructification is attained, while the means seem to be wanting: as if Providence meant to shew us, that it is not confined to any particular means; and that the work of God in this respect essentially differs from the work of man. The Ferns, have neither stalks, nor branches, nor flowers, but consist of single leaves on their pedicles, with seeds upon the backs of them. The flower of the dwarf Thistle sits upon the ground without a stalk; while the Torch-thistle, has nothing but a stalk, like the staff of a spear. The Melon-thistle is all fruit; the Opuntia, or Indian fig, all leaf: and whilst the various fruits are produced from the germens of their respective flowers, the Fig tree gives us its fruit without any such concurrence, and incloses the flowers themselves. *The Tuber terræ*, or Truffle, has neither leaf, stem, branch, flower,

nor seed; nothing but a globular root, which thrives under ground, and does not appear to be fed by fibres like other roots: yet it increases and multiplies.

It is a general rule in nature, that plants which have the same characters have like qualities; but where this rule would teach us to expect a poison, we find a plant with an agreeable odour and wholesome nourishment; as in the *Solanum Esculentum*, which is of a deadly race, with all the external characters of a night-shade. Are we not hence to learn, that quality does not arise from configuration, or from any necessity of nature; but follows the will and wisdom of the Creator; who to every plant, as to every man, *divideth severally as he will?*

It seems essential to trees, that they should be fixed in the earth, and draw their nourishment from it; but some will have no communication with the earth; affixing themselves in a strange manner to the wood of other trees, and subsisting upon their juices; yet preserving their own peculiar nature and complexion.

Flowers are commonly expanded by the heat of the Sun; but some are opened in the evening when others are closed; and break forth at midnight; particularly one, which is the

the glory of the vegetable creation; like the nightingale, which delights the ear of men, and displays its skill without a rival, while other birds are silent and at rest.

When we survey the plants of the sea, how discernible is that wisdom which hath provided for their subsistence and safety in that element! Such as have broad leaves, and would be forced from their station by tides or storms, if their roots were fixed into an earthy bottom, are fastened by the root to weighty stones and pebbles; where instead of being driven about at random by the agitations of the water, they lie safe at anchor. That they may not be bruised by lying prostrate on the ground, they are rendered powerfully buoyant, and kept in an erect position, by means of large vesicles of air, variously disposed about their leaves or their stalks, as the difference of their form and structure may require. A similar provision for their preservation is observable in many of the plants which grow upon the land. Such as are tender and flexible, and apt to trail upon the ground, are furnished with spiral tendrils, or other like means, by which they lay hold of such other plants as are firm and upright. What an useful lesson is this to human society! where, according to the ana-

logy

logy of nature, the strong ought to support the weak, and the defenceless should rest securely upon the powerful. How different a place would the world be, if this example were religiously followed!

And now if there are so many effects of the divine wisdom visible to us who are confined in a climate remote from the sun; what opportunities must they have, what wonders of the Lord must they see, *who go down to the sea in ships*, and make their observations in happier regions: where the sun, the soil, the air, all things being different, vegetation is on a much larger scale, and presents many grand and glorious objects which can never come to our sight!

In speaking of the growth of plants, which is the second thing to be considered, I must forbear to attempt a theory. The first particular which meets us is that spoken of in the text; that herbs and trees carry their *seeds in themselves*: from whence it seems deducible, that the primeval tree or plant, which was contemporary with the first father of mankind, included all the trees that should proceed from it to the end of time: so that the seed which is growing into an herb at this day is but an evolution of something which subsisted

sisted in the first plant at the creation. How to get clear of this consequence we do not see; and to pursue it we are not able; our imagination is bewildered and lost in the idea of such a succession; the rudiments of a future forest included in a single acorn!

It is not so far beyond us to observe, how the elements in their several capacities are made subservient to the life and increase of plants. The soil on which they grow contains a mixture of principles, wisely tempered together, which supply vegetables with matter for their nourishment; and their root with its fibres and lacteals, which takes in this nourishment, answers the same purpose as the stomach in animals. Water is the vehicle which conveys this nourishment into their vessels; while the sun and air, expanding and contracting, keep up an oscillatory motion analogous to that of respiration.

It is now allowed, that there is both a vital circulation of the juices in vegetables, and a large perspiration from their pores: which latter is become a subject of great curiosity and importance, from the successful labours of those who have cultivated this part of natural philosophy. The circulation in plants is strong in the spring, and languid in the winter;

winter; in some it is so forcible and abundant, that if their vessels are opened at an improper season, they will bleed to death, as when an artery is divided in the human body. If the finer spirit evaporates from a plant, and it has no fresh supply, it becomes instantly flaccid and fadeing, as an animal body dies with the departure of its breath.

The process of vegetation is forwarded in a wonderful manner by the vicissitude of day and night, and the changes of the weather. The heat of the sun raises a moist, elastic vapour, which fills and expands certain vessels in plants, and so gradually enlarges their bulk; while the colder air of the night condenses and digests the matter which has been raised, and so confirms the work of the day. We complain of cold blasts and clouded skies, by the intervention of which vegetation rapidly advancing is suddenly stopped and seems stationary: but this may be wisely ordained by Providence: the growth of herbs may be too hasty; they are weak in substance, if they are drawn forward too fast. A cold season prevents this too hasty growth; as in the moral world some seasonable disappointment may give a salutary check to an aspiring mind, and establish it in wisdom and patience. Even the

the roughest motions of the elements have their use. Winds and storms, which agitate the body of trees and herbs, loosen the earth about their roots, and make way for their fibres to multiply, and to strike more kindly into the soil, to find new nourishment. Thus is nature more effectually progressive when it seems to be stationary or even retrograde; and all things work together for good; which they could never do but under the foresight and direction of an all-wise Providence.

But above all, the showers of heaven, concurring with the sun, promote the work of vegetation. They keep the matter of the soil soluble, and consequently moveable; for salts cannot act but in a state of solution; they furnish matter for an expansive vapour, which acts internally and externally; and, what is but little understood, though equally worthy of admiration, the rain brings down with it an invigorating ethereal spirit from the clouds, which gives it an efficacy far beyond all the waterings which human labour can administer. It is here in the kingdom of nature as in the kingdom of grace; nothing can succeed without a blessing from heaven: *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights.*

*Lights**. How commonly do we see, that some seeds which lie still in the ground, and cannot be made to stir by all the waterings of art, will suddenly start up to life as soon as they are touched by a watering from the heavens! Such is the difference between the gifts of God and the gifts of man.

But, thirdly, the goodness of God, as well as his power and wisdom, is displayed in the uses of plants; and it is rather a matter of duty than of curiosity to consider them attentively. It is the wisdom of man to learn the will of God from the state of nature, as well as from the pages of revelation; and it is his happiness to follow it when known. According to the state of nature, a preference seems to be given to vegetable diet. For the useful and harmless cattle, which either feed man with their milk, or assist him in his labours, nothing is provided but a vegetable or farinaceous diet. Animal food is proper to wild beasts of fierce and savage natures; and the man who abuses it is too nearly allied to that class of animals. The beasts distinguished by the Levitical Law as proper and wholesome to man are very few. The inhabitants of the

* James i. 17.

waters,

waters, which supply a more temperate diet, are administered to us in much greater variety: but the luxuriance of nature is found in the vegetable kingdom; where the roots, leaves, fruits, and seeds of plants, afford all that is most tempting to the eye, grateful to the taste, and desirable to the appetite. The sweetest food in the world, which is honey, is a composition elaborated by the bee from the flowers of vegetables. The emblematical horn of plenty is not stored with beasts, fowls, and fishes, but with herbs and fruits for the sustenance and delight of man. The efficacy of a vegetable diet, for preserving the body in health, and the mind in a clear and temperate state, hath in all ages been confirmed by the experience of the wise and good. The greatest instances of longevity have been found among the virtuous and the recluse, who feasted on the herbs and roots which their own hands had cultivated.

Of the goodness and wisdom of God we have farther evidence in the medicinal herbs. If men obtain the reputation of wisdom by a judicious application of them to the cure of diseases; what must that original wisdom be, which gave them their forms and their faculties! *The Lord*, saith the son of Sirach, *hath*

created medicines out of the earth, and he that is wise will not despise them†. When he considers who is the author of them, he will be persuaded, that, if understood, they must be found more safe in their use, than the preparations of human art; he will therefore respect their virtues, and give them the preference which is due to them. There is certainly a momentum in mineral preparations, which produces sudden and great effects; but their power approaches too near to violence; while the vegetable medicines, ordained to be such by the Creator, are more congenial to the human constitution; and thus a reasonable alliance is preserved between the medicine of man and the diet of man; but we never eat minerals, though we use them in medicine; often with some good, but also with the danger of some bad effect. The mineral materials of a volcano will warm us, as the fuel of any other fire; but at the same time they may suffocate us, or send down ruin upon our heads.

What possible modification of minerals can chemistry exhibit, which will quiet a distempered agitation of the nerves, and lessen the

† Ecclus. xxxviii. 4.

sensation

sensation of pain, which would otherwise be insupportable? But this desirable effect is wonderfully produced by the medicinal juice of the poppy. The learned know that there are several effects in medicine, which are never to be obtained but from vegetables; and so persuaded are they of a specific, salutary power in them, that they apply for help even to such plants as are poisonous. That the poisonous plants have their use, we must presume, because they have the same divine author with the rest, *Every creature of God is good* in its proper capacity; but if we mistake its capacity, we shall abuse it. Poisonous herbs, from their great power, may do service internally, in very small quantities: but we should rather suppose, from what we have heard and seen, that they were intended chiefly for external application; in which they can perform wonders; and medicine might perhaps be improved, if more experiments were made in this way. But, it is not my province to enlarge here, and I have nothing but a good meaning to plead for proceeding thus far.

It is now to be observed, lastly, that the same wisdom, which ordained the vegetable creation for the natural use of feeding and

healing the body, hath applied it also to a moral or intellectual use, for the enlarging of our ideas, and the enlightening of our understandings. It joins its voice in the universal chorus of all created things, and to the ear of reason celebrates the wisdom of the Almighty Creator. As *the heavens*, from day unto day, and from night unto night, *declare the glory of God*, so do the productions of the earth, all trees and herbs, in their places and seasons, speak the same language; from the climates of the north to the torrid regions of the south, and from the winter to the spring and the harvest.

The holy scripture hath many wise, and some beautiful allusions to the vegetable creation, for moral and religious instruction. The most ancient piece of this sort is the parable of *Jotham* in the book of *Judges;* where the dispositions and humours of men, and their effects in society, are illustrated by the different natures of trees. On occasion of *Abimelech*'s treachery, *Jotham* tells the people, under the form of a fable, that the trees went forth to anoint them a king; and when all the good and honourable, as the olive, the fig-tree, and the vine, declined the trouble of ruling in society, the bramble offered his services,

vices, and invited them to *trust* in his *shadow*†. Thus it had happened in the case of *Abimelech:* and doth not experience shew us at this day, that the moral is still good? that the worst, and most worthless, are always the most forward to thrust themselves into power, and promise great things; how safe and happy we should be under their shadow! As if brambles, of a nature to tear the skin, and draw blood from every part of the body, and fit for nothing but to be burned out of the way, could form an agreeable shade for the people to sit under. The good and the virtuous, who are fruitful and happy in themselves, would be deprived of their internal comforts by the hurry and danger which attend the possession of power: but bad men, who have no source of content and enjoyment within themselves, are always so forward to seek it without themselves, and would turn the world upside down, or tear its inhabitants to pieces, to satisfy their own ambition. When circumstances conspire to bring those into action who are most worthy of power, then people sit *under the vine*, and *under the fig-tree*, in the enjoyment of peace and plenty.

† See Judges ix. 8, &c.

Our blessed Saviour, with a like allusion, hath referred us to the natural state and condition of plants and flowers; thence to learn the unprofitableness of that anxiety and distrust, with which we seek after the things of this world. *Consider the lilies, how they grow—If God so clothe the grass of the field, shall he not much more clothe you?* § As if he had said: "You admire the beautiful clothing of a flower; and indeed it is worthy of all admiration: the God on whom *you* depend is the author of its wonderful contexture; whence you ought to learn, that if he hath bestowed this rich attire upon the inferior part of the creation, the grass of the field, so fading and transient, he will never leave you unprovided who are made for eternity."

The accidents to which plants are exposed in their growth, afford matter for the beautiful and instructive parable of the sower, which conveys as much in a few plain words, as a volume could do in any other form ‡. The seed of God's word, when it is sown by a preacher, may fall into an honest and good heart, as the seed of the sower into a happy, fruitful soil; or it may light among the thorns

§ Matt. vi. 22. ‡ Matt. xiii. 3, &c.

of

of worldly cares, and the rank weeds of worldly pleasures, which, springing up with it, will choke it, and render it unfruitful: or it may fall into an hasty, impatient mind, like seed upon a shallow, rocky soil, where it has no depth of earth, and so cannot endure when the heat of the sun dries it. Other minds are open to the ways of the world in public or fashionable life, and unguarded against the dangers of sin; so are exposed to the depredations of evil spirits, which rob them of what they had heard: as birds of the air pick up without fear or molestation the seeds which are scattered by the side of a public road.

The transient nature of plants and flowers has given occasion to many striking representations of the brevity and vanity of this mortal life. "As the leaves wither and fall "away from the trees, and others succeed, "so," saith an ancient poet, "are the gene- "rations of men *."

* Οιη περ φυλλων γενεη, τοιηδε και ανδρων.
Φυλλα τα μεν τ' ανεμος χαμαδις χεει.
Hom. Il. ζ. 146.

Like leaves on trees the race of man is found,
Now green in youth, now with'ring on the ground.
Pope's Homer, b. 6. l. 181.

How sublime and affecting is that reflection in the book of Job—" Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery: he cometh up like a flower, and is cut down †:" In the same figurative language doth the Psalmist speak of the flourishing state of man in youth, and his decay in the time of age: " In the morning they are like the grass which groweth up, in the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withered." To cure us of our confidence in the wealth and prosperity of this world, and make way for the serious temper of the gospel, nothing can be more expressive and rhetorical than that sentence of St. James: " Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich in that he is made low; because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away: for the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so shall the rich man fade away in his ways:" that is, he shall decay in his prosperity, as the flower fades the sooner for the enjoyment of the sun-shine.

† Job xiv. 2.

The

The reviving of seeds and roots buried in the earth, though so common a fact, is yet so wonderful, that it is more than a figure, it is a pledge and assurance that the dead shall rise again. In every spring nature presents us with a general resurrection in the vegetable world, after a temporary death and burial in the winter. The root that lies dormant under the ground *is a prisoner of hope*, and waits for the return of the vernal sun. If it could speak, it might repeat (and to the ear of faith it does repeat) those words of the apostle:—*O grave, where is thy victory?* So plainly doth vegetable nature preach this doctrine of the resurrection, that the man is supposed to be senseless, who does not make this use of it—*thou fool, it is not quickened, except it die.*

I would now only observe, after what hath been said, that a right use of our present subject in all its parts must contribute to the dignity, and to the happiness of man. How innocently, and how pleasantly is he entertained, who in cultivating the various productions of the earth, hath the elements working with him, and assisting him to perfect his flowers and fruits, and raise a Paradise around

him! What a rational and noble employment it is, to trace the effects of divine wisdom in a survey of the vegetable kingdom; in the beautiful forms of plants, their endless variety, the configuration of their organs, the distinction of their characters; the places of their inhabitation, by land, by sea, in rivers and in lakes, on rocks and mountains, in the fields, the pastures, and the woods; with their successions from the spring to the summer, from the summer to the autumn; their appearances by day and by night!

How proper is it to use them for health and for temperance, as the wise have done, and as the Creator, ever mindful of the *sum* of our happiness, hath appointed! What a respectable benefactor is he to mankind, who discovers their virtues in medicine, and applies them to the relief of the miserable; an office ever grateful to a benevolent mind!

But happiest of all is he, who having cultivated herbs and trees, and studied their virtues, and applied them for his own, and for the common benefit, rises from thence to a contemplation of the great Parent of good, whom he sees and adores in these his glorious works. The world cannot shew us a more exalted

exalted character than that of a truly religious philosopher, who delights to turn all things to the glory of God: who from the objects of his sight derives improvement to his mind, and in the glass of things temporal sees the image of things eternal. Let a man have all the world can give him; he is still miserable, if he has a groveling, unlettered, indevout mind: let him have his gardens, his fields, his woods, and his lawns, for grandeur, ornament, plenty and gratification; while at the same time God is not in all his thoughts. And let another have neither field nor garden; let him only look at nature with an enlightened mind; a mind which can see and adore the Creator in his works; can consider them as demonstrations of his power, his wisdom, his goodness, his truth: this man is *greater*, as well as happier, in his poverty, than the other in his riches. The one is but little higher than a beast, the other but little lower than an angel.

We ought therefore to praise those who in their life-time made this use of the natural world, and gratefully to remember that piety which directed our minds to an annual commemoration of God's wisdom in the works of

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the vegetable creation: a great subject; in discoursing on which, I have only scattered some seeds, to be opened and perfected by your future meditation; in which may the grace of God assist us all, through Jesus Christ our Lord, &c.

SERMON

SERMON II.

AND GOD MADE THE BEAST OF THE EARTH AFTER HIS KIND, AND CATTLE AFTER THEIR KIND, AND EVERY THING THAT CREEPETH UPON THE EARTH AFTER HIS KIND: AND GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD. GEN. I. 25.

WHEN the works of God were finished, his eye surveyed them, and saw that they were *good;* that they were perfect in their construction, and capable of answering all the ends to which they were appointed. As far as man can observe this *goodness* in the works of nature, and see the mind of the Creator in the creature, so far he sees things as God sees them, and becomes partaker of a divine pleasure.

On a former occasion, I endeavoured to point out some of that goodness which is

found in the *vegetable* kingdom *: from whence I shall now proceed to the *animal*, with a desire to trace the same goodness in the structure, qualities, and œconomy of living creatures: but confining myself chiefly to those spoken of in the text, *beasts* and *cattle*.

When vegetable and animal life are compared, different things are to be admired, but nothing is to be preferred; for the wisdom of the Creator, being infinite, is every where equal to itself: to its works nothing can be added with advantage, nothing can be taken from them without loss. All things are perfect in their several kinds, and possessed of that goodness or sufficiency which must be found in every work of God.

Yet there is a visible series or scale in the natural creation; where those derivative powers which are in the creature, rise from the lower to the higher, and keep ascending regularly till we can follow them no farther. When we pass from a lower to an higher order of beings, some new faculty presents itself to our admiration. Thus, betwixt plants and animals there are essential differences, which

* See the preceding Sermon on *the Religious Use of Botanical Philosophy*.

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immediately strike us. A plant is a system of life, but insensitive, and fixed to a certain spot. An animal hath voluntary motion, sense, or perception, and is capable of pain and pleasure. Yet in the construction of each there are some general principles which very obviously connect them. It is literally as well as metaphorically true, that trees have limbs, and an animal body branches. A vascular system is also common to both, in the channels of which life is maintained and circulated. When the trachea, with its branches in the lungs, or the veins and arteries, or the nerves, are separately represented, we have the figure of a tree. The leaves of trees have a fibrous and a fleshy part; their bark is a covering, which answers to the skin in animals. An active vapour pervades them both, and perspires from both, which is necessary to the preservation of health and vigour.

The parallel might be extended to their wounds and distempers: but we must not be too minute, when our purpose is rather to raise devotion than to satisfy curiosity. However, it ought not to be omitted, that the *vis vitæ*, or involuntary, mechanical force of animal life, is kept up by the same elements which

which act upon plants for their growth and support.

The organs of respiration, acted upon by the air, are as the first wheel in a machine, which receives the moving power; heat preserves the fluidity of the blood and humours, and acts as an expanding force in the stomach, heart, and blood-vessels; which force is counteracted from without by the atmospherical pressure; for the want of which, the vessels would be ruptured by the prevailing of the force within.

The nerves form another distinct branch of the animal system, and are accommodated by the Creator to the action of that subtile, forcible fluid, which in its different capacities we sometimes call *light*, and sometimes *ether*. Late experiments have shewn us how little this acts on the blood-vessels, and how powerfully on the nerves and muscles, the functions of which it will therefore restore, and hath done in several cases, when they have been impaired by diseases or accidents.

The animal mechanism, and the forces of life, are things fearful and wonderful in themselves, and of such deep research, that I am afraid of venturing too far; but thus far I think

think we are safe, that animal life, considered only as *motion*, is maintained like the other motions of nature, by the action of contrary forces; in which there is this wonderful property, that neither appears to have the priority; and their joint effect is a motion, which in theory is perpetual. The flame of a candle cannot burn without fire, nor be lighted without air: which of these is first we cannot say, for they seem co-instantaneous; and they continue to work together till the matter fails which they work upon.

Thus, when an animal is born into the world, and the candle of life is lighted up, it is hard to give any precedence to the elementary powers which support it. The weight of the atmosphere forces into the lungs, as soon as they are exposed to its action, that air which is the breath of life; but this could not happen, unless the more subtile element were to occasion a rarefaction within: and this reciprocation, once begun, is continued through life: though it will fail if either of the elements cease to act upon it. With extreme cold, the circulation of the blood will stop; and the want of air, or the admission of that which is improper, will extinguish the vital motion in the lungs. But here, as the power

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of the Creator is found to maintain a vegetable life in plants, where the necessary means seem to be wanting; so, when we think the mechanism of animal life is understood, and that heat, and respiration, and circulation, are all necessary to it, we look farther, and find animals living without respiration; some totally, and others (which is more wonderful) occasionally. Some are comparatively, if not positively, cold in their temperature; as those which lie under water in the winter months. These are unable to endure that degree of heat which is the life of others: as there are plants which fix themselves upon the bleak head of a mountain, and will never be reconciled to a richer soil, and a warmer air. Thus doth the wisdom of God work by various ways to the same end; and animal life is maintained where the means of life seem to be wanting. That the elements which act upon the barometer and thermometer are necessary to animal life cannot be doubted, however the receptive faculties of organised matter may be varied. We have musical sounds from the pipe, the string, and the drum; but never without the musical element of air.

If we enquire how the wisdom of the Creator is displayed in the different kinds of animals,

animals, the field is so large, that the time will permit us to consider those only to which we are directed by the words of the text, *beasts of the earth and cattle after their kind.* And that we may proceed herein without confusion, we must take advantage of a plain and significant distinction which the Holy Scripture hath proposed to us for our learning.

The law of *Moses*, in the xith chapter of *Leviticus*, divides the brute creation into two grand parties, from the fashion of their feet, and their manner of feeding; that is, from the *parting of the hoof*, and the *chewing of the cud*; which properties are indications of their general characters, as *wild* or *tame*. For the dividing of the hoof and the chewing of the cud are peculiar to those cattle which are serviceable to man's life, as sheep, oxen, goats, deer, and their several kinds. These are shod by the Creator for a peaceable and inoffensive progress through life; as the Scripture exhorts us to be *shod* in like manner *with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace*. They live temperately upon herbage, the diet of students and saints; and after the taking of their food, chew it deliberately over again for better digestion; in which act they have all the appearance a brute can assume of pensiveness or meditation;

ditation; which is metaphorically called *rumination*, with reference to this property of certain animals.

Such are these: but when we compare the beasts of the field and the forest, they, instead of the harmless hoof, have feet which are *swift to shed blood**, sharp claws to seize upon their prey, and teeth to devour it; such as lions, tygers, leopards, wolves, foxes, and smaller vermin.

Where one of the Mosaic marks is found, and the other is wanting, such creatures are of a middle nature between the wild and the tame; as the swine, the hare, and some others. Those that part the hoof afford us wholesome nourishment; those that are shod with any kind of hoof may be made useful to man; as the camel, the horse, the ass, the mule; all of which are fit to travel and carry burthens. But when the foot is divided into many parts, and armed with claws, there is but small hope of the manners; such creatures being in general either murderers, or hunters, or thieves; the malefactors and felons of the brute creation: though among the wild there are all the possible gradations of ferocity and evil temper.

* Rom. iii. 15.

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Who can review the creatures of God, as they arrange themselves under the two great denominations of wild and tame, without wondering at their different dispositions and ways of life! Sheep and oxen lead a sociable as well as a peaceable life: they are formed into flocks and herds; and as they live honestly they walk openly in the day. The time of darkness is to them, as to the virtuous and sober amongst men, a time of rest. But the beast of prey goeth about in solitude: the time of darkness is to him the time of action; then he visits the folds of sheep, and stalls of oxen, thirsting for their blood; as the thief and the murderer visits the habitations of men, for an opportunity of robbing and destroying, under the concealment of the night. When the sun ariseth the beast of prey retires to the covert of the forest; and while the cattle are spreading themselves over a thousand hills in search of pasture, the tyrant of the desart is laying himself down in his den, to sleep off the fumes of his bloody meal. The ways of men are not less different than the ways of beasts: and here we may see them represented as in a glass; for, as the quietness of the pasture, in which the cattle spend their day, is to the howlings of a wilderness in the night, such is

the virtuous life of honest labour to the life of the thief, the oppressor, the murderer, and the midnight gamester, who live upon the losses and sufferings of other men.

The different qualities and properties in which brute creatures excel are as manifest proofs of the divine wisdom as their different modes of living. The horse excels in strength and courage. His aptness for war is finely touched in the book of Job—*Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?—He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men: he mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword*[*]. When he heareth the sound of the trumpets, and the noise of the battle at a distance, the thunder of the captains and their shouting, he signifies by his voice and his motion, that he is impatient to join them and be in action. The fox excels in subtilty and subterfuge; and his arts find employment for some amongst mankind, who disdain to busy themselves in any useful study or labour for the benefit of the community.

The dog is gifted with that sagacity, vigilance, and fidelity, which qualify him to be

* Job xxxix. 19.

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the guard, the companion, the friend of man; and happy is he, who finds a friend as true and uncorrupt as this animal; who will rather die by the side of his master than take a bribe of a stranger to betray him. The sense whereby he is enabled to trace a single person through a croud of people, is a gift of the Creator, which exceeds our comprehension: and many other examples of the sagacity of this creature would be incredible, if they were not common and well attested. By what natural faculties they are performed, it is hard for us to conjecture.

In all brute creatures there is implanted an ardent attention towards their offspring, which prevails over every other consideration. Even the weakest creatures will undertake to defend and preserve their young at the hazard of their lives. They do not leave their offspring to be attended for hire by others, that they may be at liberty to follow their own unprofitable pleasures: this duty is their greatest pleasure; and yet it never exceeds the bounds of discretion. Beasts, with all their tenderness, are never betrayed into any acts of false indulgence: their affection never gratifies itself with raising up their young to an unnatural state of ease, idleness, and ignorance: as soon

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as they are well able to exercise the faculties the Creator hath given them, they are compelled by their parents to provide for their own wants. And, through the divine bounty, the world is open to them, and their own labour is sufficient to maintain them. Provision of the proper sort is within the reach of every species, and a place is allotted to each, in which it does not encroach upon the rest. The mountains and rocks are *a refuge for the wild goats*, which climb over frightful precipices to a pasture where no other creature can partake with them. The beast of prey is covered by the wood, and can feed himself according to his nature. Foxes, and other animals, have holes wherein they rest and hide themselves under the earth. The sheep hath a fold, the ox hath a stall, provided for them by man; having no covert provided by themselves. Beasts of labour are maintained by their labour; for few men are so unjust as to *muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.*

The different manners of beasts and cattle, with their dependence upon the bounty of God, are briefly described to us in those sublime terms which are peculiar to the Scripture. *Thou makest darkness that it may be night; wherein all the beasts of the forest do*

move.

move. The lions roaring after their prey do seek their meat from God. The sun ariseth, and they get them away together, and lay them down in their dens. (Then) *man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening;* and those serviceable worthy creatures, which are the companions of his labour, go along with him—*O Lord, how manifold are thy works; in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches!* All creatures *wait upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. When thou givest it them, they gather it; and when thou openest thine hand they are filled with good.*" How great is this idea! the hand of man scatters food to the few creatures that are about him; but when the hand of God is opened, a world is fed and satisfied.

The usefulness of cattle to the support, comfort, and convenience of man, is a topic which would carry us out to a great length. The state of man, as an inhabitant of this world, could not be maintained without them. From cattle we have food, and raiment, and assistance, and employment. How wisely and mercifully is it ordained, that those creatures which afford us wholesome nourishment are disposed to live with us, that we may live

upon them: Their milk is so agreeable to the human constitution, and so pleasant in itself, that it is celebrated among the first blessings of the promised land. The wool of the sheep gives us clothing, such as the world cannot equal: and late discoveries explain to us an essential difference between the vegetable clothing and the animal; the former of which draws off, the latter retains and promotes animal heat; and is found to assist in the cure of some very critical distempers. What would the labour of man avail, without the strength and patience of beasts to assist him in the cultivation of the earth, and the necessary business of life? even the fiercest of creatures *made to be taken and destroyed**, have their use; for, in taking and destroying them, man is employed; and so one great purpose of his present life is answered. Whoever considers this, will find, that the true state of nature is a state of society; in which men necessarily united against the beasts of the field, which would otherwise prevail against them: and he is fittest to be a leader in natural society, who can best defend others against their natural enemies the beasts. Thus from the nature

* 2 Pet. ii. 12.

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of wild beasts arises one of the employments of man, which is that of hunting: to which war is nearly allied, as another sort of hunting; and it should never be entered upon, but for reasons the same with those which arm us against the beasts that would devour us; that is, for self-defence: though it is too true in fact, that men hunt men for their spoils, as they hunt wild beasts for their skins: and the scalps of men are the trophies of some, as the scalps of foxes are nailed up by others against a wall.

Hunters and warriors make a great figure in the world; but he that feeds the sheep is more honourably employed than he who pursues the lion. The attendance of man upon those innocent creatures which God hath ordained for his use, is an employment which succeeded to the life of paradise. The holy patriarchs and servants of God were taught to prefer the occupation of shepherds. Their riches consisted in flocks and herds; and it was their pleasure, as well as their labour, to wait upon them in tents, amidst the various and beautiful scenery of the mountains, the groves, the fields, and streams of water. The fancy of man hath always been delighted with the simple pleasures of

the pastoral life; which probably afforded matter to the first poetry before the tumultuous scenes of war and slaughter had been celebrated in verse. Whatever the improvements of modern times may be, the imagination has a pleasure in resigning them all, to dwell upon the less improved manners of those who lived in the purer ages. O happy state of health, innocence, plenty, and pleasure; plenty without luxury, and pleasure without corruption! How far preferable to that artificial state of life, into which we have been brought by overstrained refinements in civilization, and commerce too much extended! where corruption of manners, unnatural, and consequently unhealthy modes of living, perplexity of law, consumption of property, and other kindred evils, conspire to render life so vain and unsatisfactory, that many throw it away in despair, as not worth having. A false glare of tinselled happiness is found amongst the rich and the great, with such distressing want and misery amongst the poor, as nature knows nothing of; and which can arise only from the false principles and selfish views and expedients of a weak and degenerate policy.

It hath been made a question, whether the world and the creatures that belong to it were made for the benefit of man: which question was well argued, and wisely determined in the affirmative, by the philosophical orator of Rome: but the modern infidel, to make man an inconsiderable being, has a strong propensity to the negative; and some poets, in their way of arguing, have attempted to make the subject ridiculous. We see that even the fiercest creatures have their use, by driving men into society for their mutual defence. All creatures in general are the subjects of man, whose dominion is established by a charter from heaven. By the reason and understanding of man the swiftest are overtaken, and the strongest are overpowered: he can take them as his property, manage them as his servants, confine them as his captives, and destroy them at his pleasure: they are impressed with a fear and dread of him, as if they were sensible of his power. Most of them serve to some natural use; but all have their intellectual use, in giving necessary ideas and lessons of wisdom to the mind of man. The goodness of God is no where more manifest than in this intellectual application of brute animals and their properties; no one creature

creature upon earth can make that use of man, which man makes of all the rest; in rendering himself, if he will, a better reasoner, a better citizen, a more devout worshipper of God. This is so important a part of our present subject, so curious in itself, and so necessary to the improvement of the human understanding, that I must beg your attention, while I dwell upon it as far as the time will permit.

1. First then, we borrow from beasts, cattle, and creeping things of the earth, many of our best ideas of moral good and evil. As it was said by *Solomon*, "Go to the *ant*, consider her ways and be wise;" so might it be said, with parity of reason, go to the sheep for a pattern of submission and obedience: go to the ox for an example of patient labour: go to the swine; consider its stubborn disposition, its intemperance, and beastly uncleanness; and thence learn to abhor and avoid them. The passage taken by St. *Paul* from the poet *Callimachus* contains a plain allusion to the unprofitable character of this beast—"The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies*:" for the swine of the Eastern

* Κρῆτες ἀεὶ ψεῦσται, κακὰ θηρία, γαστέρες ἀργαί. Tit. i. 12.

countries

countries drags its belly upon the ground, and is so incapable of speed, that it can scarcely walk. And such is man, if he is a slave to his bodily appetites; his feet are retarded by the heaviness of his nature, and he can make no progress in any work that is good, useful, or ingenious.

The first man was instructed in Paradise from the qualities of brute creatures, which God summoned before him for his observation. The first writing in the world was by pictures and forms of animal life, for the conveying of religious and moral truth to the mind, before alphabetical writing was in use. These forms or likenesses had been abused by the idolaters of Egypt; so God forbad the use of them, and appointed the alphabetical signatures in their stead; which still retain some traces of the old animal forms *. The moral fables of antiquity are chiefly founded on the properties and manners of brute creatures, which are made to converse and reason according to the views and tempers of each, and so to give notice of the ways of different sorts

* See some very ingenious observations on the Origin and Progress of Alphabetic Writing, by the Rev. Mr. *Davy*, printed for Cadell.

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of men. Thus also did God instruct his people in the law of *Moses*, by ordering their *diet* as they were to order their *conversation*. The unclean, and the rapacious, were prohibited, and, as it were, excommunicated; the useful, gentle, and obedient were selected for food and sacrifice. The prophets explain things in the same way. *Isaiah* describes the conversion of cruel and immoral heathens to the gospel of peace, under the figure of a miraculous reformation amongst the wild beasts of the earth; when *the lion* should *eat straw like the ox*, the wolf and the lamb should *feed together*, and all the savage kinds should put off the nature of evil beasts, as formerly when they had all lived quietly under the same roof in Noah's ark, a figure of the church of Christ. The New Testament carries on the same mode of instruction, and Peter is taught in a vision that a communication was to be opened between the Jews and the Gentiles, under the figure of a liberty to eat all kinds of unclean beasts, now to be made clean by their reception to the purity of the gospel *. Even the ill qualities of the great adversary of mankind are set forth for our dread and abhor-

* See Acts x. Compare verses 14, 15, and 28.

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rence, from *Genesis* to the *Revelation*, under the emblem of the *old serpent, cursed above every beast of the field;* insidious, insinuating, double-tongued, and having the *power of death* in his bite. We see him again under the emblem of *a roaring lion*, going about and seeking whom he may devour. Thus are all the creatures serviceable, both good and bad, in giving us ideas for the improvement of the mind and manners.

2. We may observe next, that industry and activity are recommended to us by the example of the whole animal creation. All work, that they may eat; and therefore, he, who does not work, is not fit to live. All creatures *seek* their meat from God; it is not provided for any of them in an inactive state, but they must employ themselves to find and obtain it. Birds of the air are upon the wing from morning till evening. Wild creatures must hunt before they can be fed. Some partake of that sentence of labour passed upon man after the fall, and labour with him for their daily food. If it is then the appointment of God, that all his creatures should be in action, the idle man is a monster in the creation, who must pay for his offence either by poverty, sickness, ignorance, or vice; and

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must, in some respect or other, become a nuisance to society; on which consideration, it is a great evil in government to maintain any, or to suffer any, for want of employment, to live idly.

3. From the state of beasts under the dominion of man, as God hath wisely established it, the parallel is very strong for the benefit and necessity of government amongst mankind.

Among brute beasts we find the two classes of wild and tame, totally differing in their manners, and in a state of hostility with each other. Man is over them all, to feed the gentle and domestic, to reward the laborious, and to secure them from the incursions of the common enemy. To the one sort he is a governor and protector; to the other an avenger, who ought not to bear the sword in vain; for if he does, he himself must suffer by it as well as the beasts that are committed to his care; the enemy being equally at war with both.

Let us now suppose this law of subordination and subjection to be dissolved: let us suppose the authority of man to be withdrawn, and all animals abandoned to their natural liberty: what would be the consequence? The swine would make his part good by his impudence,

dence, and would root up the fruits of the earth in fields or gardens at his pleasure. Foxes, and other vermin, would no longer be thieves, because there would be none to judge them, and so they would take what they wanted by natural right. The wolves would scatter the sheep and tear them to pieces: the dogs, having no master to encourage and direct them, would forget their duty, and join the enemy: and thus the best part of the animal creation would become a prey to the worst. The dogs might perchance quarrel sometimes with a wolf: but the sheep would be no gainers by that.

In order to bring things to this state, the wolf might persuade the sheep, that the power of the shepherd is an imposition, a base encroachment of that tyrant and usurper man; that all creatures are born *free* and *equal;* and that they would see blessed times, if they were to assert their natural rights and become independent. The wolf, that should thus argue for universal liberty, would be a wise wolf; for he would soon be a gainer: but the sheep that should admit the argument, and bring up her lambs in the doctrine, would be a silly sheep indeed; for she would soon be a

loser, chased out of her pasture, and worried out of her life.

Among men there certainly is the same difference as among the beasts. There is a sort of them with hard and unfeeling tempers, impudent foreheads, idle dispositions, voracious appetites, and endless wants: who will push themselves into importance, and make their party good either by importunity or by force. There is another sort, modest, sober, and gentle; fearful of offending, and contented with a little. This difference, so obvious and indisputable, is totally overlooked by those who plead for universal liberty and natural equality: for men are no more equal in their natures than the lamb and the lion's whelp: and supposing liberty to be universal, the bold, the impudent, the idle, and the rapacious, instantly make their fortunes out of the peaceable and the patient. Therefore these can never live together in the world, but under the ordinance of God, who has appointed an authority of law and magistracy, which lays a common restraint upon all: whence all good men, who mean well and know their duty, will pray for those who are in authority, that God would direct their counsels and strengthen their hands in the

execution of his laws, for the common good: that the fences may not be weak, nor the beast of prey find friends and accomplices within the fold. It is of pernicious consequence to the peace of mankind, that there is a certain wild spirit of reforming policy, which, whether it works with the commanding air and garb of philosophy, or with the powers of oratory, or the fancies of poetry, can never rest till it has made men wolves to one another; for, as things are, this must be the effect of natural equality brought to its proper issue. If we would reason like men, let us first inform ourselves from the regulations and laws which God hath established in the world: this will be our best philosophy: When oratory takes us off from this ground, it is nothing but sophistry; and poetry, when it misrepresents the nature of things, is delusion and madness.

4. But now, fourthly, as the animal creation sets before us the natural interests of men in society, it leads us farther on to the attributes and perfections of God; as the stream, if we trace it upwards, must bring us to the fountain. The whole world, as an effect, is so constituted as to instruct us in the nature of its cause. Thus the effect of motion in

the world demonstrates a cause which has motion from itself, and in which all other motion must begin. Derivative life in living creatures must descend from a life which is original; that is, from a Being, *who*, as the Scripture speaks, *only hath immortality.*

The faculty of sight, so piercing and extensive in some creatures, and so necessary to all, directs us to an all-seeing Power, from which nothing can be hid. He that made the eye must see with perfect sight, and be the witness of our secret thoughts. The appearance of mechanical art in animals, which is wonderful and incomprehensible in some kinds, is a specimen or emanation of that consummate art and skill which are in the Creator himself. Natural affection in animals toward their young is a proof that the Creator, who infused it, hath the same affection to his own creatures; especially to man; *for we are his offspring.* The workings of natural affection in the creature are appealed to, as a sign or pledge of his own tender mercies to us: *can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee.* Our Saviour insists upon a like example in nature to give us

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an idea of his own tenderness toward his people: *how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!* From these and other like examples, we infer with certainty, that whatsoever is good or excellent in the creature, the original of all that goodness is in the Creator himself; the whole world being as it were a transcript or transfusion of the Divine Mind.

5. Lastly, from the consideration of those wonderful instincts which are found in living creatures, it should be our earnest desire and our highest ambition to have God for our teacher. The stork, the turtle, the crane, and the swallow, know their appointed times*, and find an unbeaten, invisible track through the air, and over the wide ocean, to a distant climate. The spider spreads and suspends its web by the nicest rules of art. The beaver, the architect of the waters, builds an habitation which no human architect could contrive or execute. The bird weaves a nest of untractable materials, which it deposes and adjusts without any difficulty. The bee designs with unerring skill what no geometrician could

* Jer. viii. 7.

teach, and measures its work in the dark. As a chemist, it has the grand secret of transmutation; extracting the sweetest of meat from the most poisonous of herbs. See how wise all these are, without the tedious forms of practice and experience! they have no elements to learn, but are well read by immediate infusion. From the same power, and in the same compendious manner, did the Apostles, on the day of Pentecost, attain to the knowledge of all languages without learning them. The working of God is to us as unaccountable in the one way of teaching as in the other. And doth not God still give to man a sense and a power superior to reason, when he appears plainly to have given such a power to inferior creatures? Will not he still teach man, who continueth to teach the beasts of the earth, and the fowls of heaven? Therefore, if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who certainly will give to men as liberally as to brutes; and they have a promise that they shall be answered if they apply for direction. Where shall the ant or the bee go, but to the Creator, to learn what no reason of man can teach them? And whither shall man go but to the same teacher? The knowledge he wants is not from himself, but from the

spirit

spirit of truth, and the word of Revelation; and now, by the sending of the Holy Ghost, and the publication of the gospel, we see that fulfilled which was written in the prophets, *they shall be all taught of God:* the grace of God hath been given to all nations as universally as instinct hath been infused into all the kinds of living creatures: and so God is just and equal in all his works: what we have not in the ordinary way of nature, we obtain in the extraordinary way of grace; which is the better and the wiser way upon all accounts; and he, who pretends to have by nature what God giveth by grace, is more unprovided, and in a worse condition, than the beasts that perish.

6. Upon the whole, the animal world sets before us the most evident assurances of the Divine wisdom, power, and goodness: and *our duty*, in respect to this subject, is equally plain from what has been said. As the government of all creatures is committed to man by the Creator, not obtained by chance, it must be considered as a *trust*, which we are seriously and faithfully to discharge. We think few men are fit to be kings, and are strangely apprehensive of despotism: yet is every man an absolute monarch over these

poor brute subjects; often shamefully abused by the wanton, the passionate, and the hard-hearted! *A righteous man*, who doeth good from a sense of duty, *regardeth the life of his beast**: he abstains from all cruelty; he rewards the labour of his brute servants and domestics, and delights to render their lives as easy and comfortable as he can; knowing that he must give an account of this as of every other trust. In their natural capacity, he uses them for his benefit with thankfulness to their Maker; in their intellectual application, he derives improvement to his mind from the contemplation of their natures. That man is a poor animal, not worthy of the name of a man, who looks upon beasts as beasts look upon him, and learns nothing from them; when a wise man may gather so much instruction, to serve him in every relation of life, whether natural, social, civil, or religious.

When we see what wisdom is found in the beasts of the earth, and fowls of the heaven; how they perform what surpasses the power of reason, because God worketh in them; let us apply to their teacher, that he may assist us in all the works necessary to the saving of our souls: that we may be as wise for the

* Prov. xii. 10.

next

next world as they are for their well-being in this world. Whatsoever gifts and talents are necessary to them, they have by nature without asking; for they cannot ask: what we want, we must pray for; God having made his teaching unto us an object of choice, and endued us with speech for the great ends of praying to him and praising him. To Him therefore, who is only wise, who only hath immortality, the Lord and giver of life, who is magnified in all his works, even the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three persons and one God, be ascribed all honour, glory, power, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON III.

AND GOD SAID, LET THE WATERS UNDER THE HEAVEN BE GATHERED TOGETHER UNTO ONE PLACE, AND LET THE DRY LAND APPEAR: AND IT WAS SO. AND GOD CALLED THE DRY LAND EARTH, AND THE GATHERING TOGETHER OF THE WATERS CALLED HE SEAS: AND GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD. GEN. I. 9, 10.

THE earth is generally considered as the place of man's habitation, and the theatre of those various actions which have filled the pages of history. When we take the earth in this sense, we find it a bad and a troublesome world, a scene of error and confusion, in which the exploits of the mischievous bear away the prize from the actions of the virtuous, and the most wicked of men are celebrated as the benefactors

nefactors of mankind. Here warlike nations have extended their borders, and erected kingdoms, which appeared in great splendor for a time, to serve the purposes of God's providence, and then vanished away like a fiery meteor of the night. Here have busy men, by fraud and violence, obtained large possessions, which soon changed their owners, and raised magnificent buildings, which are fallen into the dust. Thus do all the works of men upon earth pass away, while the earth itself, which is the work of God, and is innocent of all the evil that is done upon it, standeth sure, and his building suffereth no decay.

This is the earth which I would now propose to your consideration: the natural history is very different from its political; and, I trust, we shall find it both an agreeable and an edifying subject.

Writers, who have given us descriptions of the natural world, have divided it into three grand departments, or kingdoms, of *plants*, *animals*, and *minerals*. Of plants and animals I have treated in two former discourses; and I shall proceed now to the consideration of the earth and its minerals; in which we shall every where see the most evident proofs of the wisdom and goodness of God, and by which the

the truth of his revelation will be illustrated and confirmed.

I shall enter into no curious theories: nor will there be any occasion for it. The great outlines of nature are fittest for all the purposes of christian edification. The plainest things, and such as are best understood by every capacity, are generally the most wonderful, and the most improving to the mind that meditates upon them. Where there is much curiosity and difficulty, there is frequently less profit.

The words of the text relate the generation or birth of what is called *the Earth;* that immense body of land and water, which human writers call *the terraqueous globe:* from which we learn, that, as the *dry land* did not *appear* till the *waters were gathered together,* the land was formed under water. The wisdom of this mode of formation is evident; although the progress of it must be above our comprehension. For in water all the materials of the earth were easily moved; and by means of water, solution, separation, association and subsidence are manifestly promoted; and accordingly, by those who dig into the earth, its solid materials are found to be duly *sorted,* and have the appearance of a *sediment,*

which

which had once floated in water, and afterwards settled out of it. And if the strata of the earth in mountains are not now parallel to the horizon, but often very oblique, and sometimes nearly perpendicular, yet the construction of such masses shews that they had settled in a regular form, and were brought by some force afterwards to their present situation.

As the earth appears to have been formed under the waters, it is as manifest, to every attentive observer, that the waters did once retire from the whole surface of the earth. When we compare small things with great, we find, that as the land and the channels of rivers are worn into precipices, pits, and winding furrows, by the departure of *occasional* inundations, so the surface of the earth, upon a scale proportionably larger, doth every where present to the sight the effect of descending waters. From the tops of the highest mountains, it is furrowed with channels; which, meeting others in their descent, grow wider and deeper, and wind about, as water doth in its progress, till they fall into the bed of some river, or lead us down to the sea, into which they retired when they subsided from the land.

From

From this retiring of the waters, we derive the inequality of the earth's surface: and to that inequality we owe the generation of springs and rivers, the feeding of metallic ores and minerals in the fissures of the earth, and the regular draining off of waters, with an uninterrupted course, toward the sea. And to the great water-courses of the earth we owe most of those prospects which delight the eye. The waters, which once covered the earth, having forced their way down to the sea, left a way open for other waters ever after, over the whole face of the earth. Let the stream start from the higher grounds, and it will no where be detained till it falls into the ocean; which is a wonderful provision of divine providence, though not commonly attended to; and how it could have been brought to pass by any other mode of formation but that related in the Scripture, doth not appear. The elegant serpentine disposition of vallies, occasioned by the descent of water, constitutes the chief beauty of our prospects. Where the soil is soft and moveable, these cavities are easy and gradual, and the bottoms are rich with the vegetable matter which has been washed off from the higher grounds. But in lands of an harder texture, rocks are undermined

mined and overthrown; frightful precipices are formed by their fractures; and the vallies are rough with stones and rubbish. Yet we are no losers: for here the lines of nature are bolder. Where the face of a country is abrupt and irregular, it becomes sublime and magnificent; as a building in ruins makes a better picture, and is a fitter subject for a painter than where it has a flat and regular face. A new building, which is the production of human art, hath a littleness about it, from the uniformity of its lines; but when time and the elements have done their work upon it, it approaches nearer to the grandeur of nature.

The sea, considered in itself, with the periodical motion of its tides, and its occasional commotions by winds and storms, gives us a stupendous idea of the power and greatness of God, who hath this raging element so much under his command, that he is represented to us as holding the seas and waters of the world in *the hollow of his hand.* Nor is his goodness less evident than his power: for the agitation of the sea, by the daily reciprocations of the tides, contributes to the purity and wholesomeness of the air; the labour of man is assisted by the advance and retreat of the waters through tracts of inland country. The

sea,

sea, which seems to divide the inhabitants of the world from each other, keeps up an intercourse more effectually between the most distant parts of the globe. Mankind are likewise abundantly fed by the waters of the sea; wherein the creatures of God multiply in a much greater proportion than by land, and are all maintained without the cost or attendance of man: they are a singular flock, which have no shepherd but the Creator himself, who conducts them, at different seasons, in unmeasureable shoals, to supply the world with nourishment.

From this hasty survey of the earth, we cannot but be struck with the many ends which are answered by the generation of the earth from the waters of the sea, although we have considered but a part of them.

When we examine the substance or matter of the earth, we find all things useful, all administering in various ways to our support and convenience. Even the very dirt we tread upon is a compost of rich principles, which supply the necessary nourishment to plants: and when particles from an offensive putrid mass of earthy matter are diffused through the frame of a vegetable, they put on an appearance of beauty, which is dazzling to the

eyes,

eyes, and emit a fragrance, which is ravishing to the sense. If such a thing had not yet been, and we were told that it would be, mortals affecting wisdom would have signified their doubts; as when it was questioned *what the rising from the dead should mean.*

Below the surface of the earth, we find the various sorts of stones; the ores of metals and minerals; and the stones which are called *precious*, from their beauty and rarity. The common uses of stone in building, and the several degrees of them, from the coarsest rock to the finest marble, are well known: but still, the situation of stone, as it lies in the earth, with the property of that stone which is most ordinary, are worthy of particular consideration. Beds of stone, as they lie in the quarry, are parted here and there with perpendicular cracks, by means of which the largest masses become accessible, and subject to such forces as will separate and raise them up; and unless the beds of stone had been thus naturally parted, all the art of man would have been insufficient to extract stones from the earth, for the common uses of life. Some are of such a grain that they will split like wood, and may be shivered, even without a tool, into thin plates, by the force of the

weather. But wonderful above all is the property of the limestone; which, when its native moisture is totally expelled by fire, imbibes water with such force that it falls into an impalpable powder, and forms a cement, by which separate stones are indissolubly joined into one body: and it holds them together more firmly at the end of a thousand years than it did at first. This is a discovery of such importance in the art of building, that it is probably as ancient as the art itself. The use of stone and mortar is spoken of as known before the building of *Babel:* and how it could be found out, doth not appear; because, I think, there is no operation in the common course of nature which could lead to it.

It would answer no purpose here to recount the various sorts of opaque stones; some curious for their beauty, others excellent for their use. The flint enables us to produce fire, of which no creature but man hath the use and management. The fiercest of wild beasts fly from the sight with terror; and dread that fire which is kindled by man, as man himself dreads the fire of lightning which is sent from heaven.

In

In regard to the common stones of the earth, there is a certain fact which must excite the curiosity of those who attend to it. Of the pebble kinds, the greater part are formed out of fragments of stone, spar, and marble rounded by trituration in water; of which kind millions are agitated to and fro, and worn by the motion of the tides upon the shores of the sea. The inland parts of the earth, to the greatest depths, contain these pebbles; which, being the production of the sea, could never have been formed where they are found, and must, therefore, have been originally lodged by water in places which are now remote from the sea. The same may be said of an immense quantity of sand, which, though it is now lying in dry beds of earth, has the certain marks of trituration by water.

Metals and minerals, which are the more valuable productions of the earth, are, in form and appearance, but another kind of stones; under which name they are mentioned in the book of Deuteronomy; where Moses commends the promised land to the people, as a land whose *stones are iron,* and out of *whose hills they might dig brass;* not in the *form of brass,* but of *stones,* out of which brass might be extracted, and compounded by the labour

of man, and the rules of art. All the treasures of the earth are found in an imperfect state, which calls for the arts of chemistry, and makes work for the fires of the refiner; but, when due pains have been bestowed upon them, then we discover what a pure and splendid nature is given to them by the Creator. Who would think, that burnished gold, and polished steel, should have been in an obscure state, like the stones of the earth? The mind of man, improved by education, is just as different from the same mind in the state of nature.

Such is the richness and brightness of the several kinds of metals, that it hath been the custom with men, from time immemorial, to give to the metals of the earth the same names as to the lights of heaven, according to their *colour* and their *dignity*. Gold is allied to the *sun*, from its yellow colour, and its splendor; silver to the *moon*, from its whiteness, and as being next in dignity to the sun. Mercury or quicksilver takes its name from the planet nearest to the sun; copper from the planet next in order: iron, tin, and lead, were given to the remaining planets more remote from the sun.

The

The natural history of the metals seems to have had a considerable share in the mythological mysteries of heathenism *. But leaving these fanciful doctrines of men, who gave the honour of God's works to their idols, we may go on from the metals to the gems, which are of an higher order, and a more refined nature. Here the *glory of the terrestrial* approaches very near to the glory of the celestial bodies; especially in the diamond, the prince of precious stones; which vies in purity and brightness with the matter of the heavens, and appears like embodied light; insomuch that, if the fluid of life could be fixed into an ice, as the fluid of water is, we may imagine that something like the diamond would be produced. It is remarkable, that the *brightest* matter of the earth is united

* *Copper* had its name from the Island of *Cyprus*, where the use of brass was said to have been first invented; (In Cypro, ubi prima fuit æris inventio. Plin. Lib. 34, cap. 2.) and hence we may account for the mystical dedication of that Island to *Venus*, the *Cyprian* goddess, (Diva potens Cypri. Hor.) who agrees in name with a *planet* in the heavens, and with the ore of *Copper* in the earth. On this plan, it is very probable that the fable of *Jupiter*'s burial in the island of *Crete* might, at the bottom, be nothing but a mythological mode of signifying to those who were in the secret, that *tin* was found under ground in that island.

with the *richest*, for the formation of a precious stone; the various sorts which receive their colour from some metal; as the *ruby* from *gold;* the *emerald* from *copper;* whence emeralds were commonly found in the copper mines of Cyprus *. When the metals are united to a chrystalline, or *pellucid* basis, they form a gem; but, if to an opaque earthy matter, they form the high-coloured earths of the painters, which all derive their beauty from some metallic mixture. It is further remarkable, that the chrystalline matter, and the metal which gives it colour, are united in nature by the mediation of water; whereas, if we attempt to unite them by art, in the artificial gems, we are obliged to have recourse to the violence of fire, to diffuse the colouring parts through the chrystal. This, and some other like instances of the difference between the chemistry of art and the chemistry of nature, should make us cautious of pronouncing too hastily concerning subterraneous productions, lest we take that for the effect of fire, which was, in reality, the effect of water.

Instead of naming the several minerals which are dug out of the earth, I shall rather

* Theophrastus.

direct

direct your attention to two which are of more consequence than the rest: these are *salt* and *sulphur*. Salt preserves from putrefaction; and, being soluble in water, it keeps the sea sweet and wholesome. Where the heats are greater, the sea has more salt; because there is more danger of putrefaction; which teaches us, that the sea was not salted *by accident*, but by *design* *. As the doctrine of truth in the Gospel saves the world from moral corruption, so doth salt preserve it from natural corruption; whence the one is used as a figure of the other. *Ye are the salt of the earth*, said Christ to his preachers: without you the world would be as putrid as flesh is found to be without the use of salt.

The other *mineral* substance is sulphur; of universal effect, as the cement of nature for *uniting the parts of metals into masses*, or *mineralizing* them, and giving them many of their properties. It is also the grand combustible of the world; which, as it descended

* The late Dr. *Halley*, supposing that the sea grew salt by accident, in tract of time, from the waters washing away some salt from the land, proposed a new method for finding the age of the world, from the saltness of the sea. See *Phys. Disq.* where some farther observations are made on this subject.

from the heavens in rain for the destruction of Sodom, so is now the chief cause of those dreadful commotions which happen in the earth. When iron and sulphur and water meet together, a fermentation ensues, which, if strong enough, breaks out into actual fire and flame. It hath pleased God, for wise ends, to lodge these different principles near to each other, in many places, that their mixture may present to our sight one of the most tremendous appearances in nature. When the sun shines upon the calmness of the ocean, we understand that God is benevolent as well as great; and, when the volcano rages, we are to learn that he is just and terrible in his wrath and vengeance. When the law was given on mount Sinai, the whole mount trembled, and burned with fire, and there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon it. Here were all the appearances of a volcano; and, as this manifestation of God at Sinai was intended to fill the hearts of the people with the fear of God, by shewing them how terrible he is in his judgment against those who break his law; so every burning mountain, at this day in the world, should inspire the same religious fear; and, I believe, generally does, to those who are spectators

tators of it; declaring to the world, that God is the avenger of sin; and that the fires of nature, which are now but partial, and under the restraint of mercy and forbearance, shall at length break out to the burning of the earth, and of all things therein. When the flood came upon the world, the fountains of the great deep were opened; the waters of the air were added to the waters of the earth, and all united their forces to execute the divine sentence: so at the last visitation of this world, all the fountains of fire shall be opened: the burning mountains of the earth shall send forth all their hidden stores, while new ones shall be opened in all places; and the fires of the sky shall co-operate with the fires of the earth. Modern discoveries have taught us, that the sea, the earth, the air, the clouds, are replete with a subtile and penetrating matter, which, while at rest, gives us no disturbance; but, when excited to action, turns into a consuming fire, which no substance can exclude, no force can resist: so that the *elements*, which are to *melt with fervent heat*, want no accidental matter to inflame them: since all things may be burnt up by that matter which now resides within them, and is only waiting for the word from its Creator.

All

All the phænomena of nature speak some religious truth to those who have ears to hear their voice. When we say this, we do not deny that volcanos may have a natural use in purging the earth, and giving vent to combustible principles, which, if wholly confined, might shake and shatter the earth to pieces before the time. These things are very consistent, because the wisdom of God works for many different ends by the same means.

A review of the earth and its contents, however short and imperfect, must inspire us with an awful sense of the divine power and wisdom. But we are not to stop there: the natural history of the earth bears an unanswerable testimony to the truth of revelation; and we should never fail to apply it to that purpose, when an opportunity offers. The Scripture, which tells us that this earth, on which we live, is now under sentence to be destroyed by fire, doth also teach us, that it hath been once destroyed already by water: of which destruction the earth still bears such evident marks, that the belief of it is as obvious to every observer of nature, as it is necessary to a Christian. From the surface of the earth we understand, that the whole was once under water; which descended, with an acce-

accelerated velocity, from the land to the seas, toward which all the furrows of the earth are directed, and in which they terminate. Then, if we search under the earth, we find, that as man is not in the state in which God first made him, but fallen into disorder and sinfulness; so the earth has undergone some natural revolution, which, in part, dissolved its substance, and lodged within it such bodies as must have been the remains of a former earth, because they could not possibly be the productions of the present. Bones of animals, shells of fishes, fruits of trees, are found buried at all depths, and even in the midst of the hardest stone and marble. Whence we are to argue: 1. That these bodies were transported and deposited by a flood of waters; because most of them belonged to the sea. 2. That the matter of the earth must have been in a state of solution when this happened; because it could not otherwise have inclosed sea shells, and filled up their cavities through the smallest apertures. 3. That the flood was *general*, or common to the *whole world;* because these monuments of it are found in all countries of the earth; on the highest mountain, and in tracts most remote from the sea.

To

To account for a disorderly situation of things, out of their several places, under ground, we must apply to *water* or to *fire*; which two are the causes of all the changes in this globe. We cannot apply to subterraneous fire, because here is an effect which is universal, and subterraneous fire is a cause but partial and occasional; the marks of which, when compared with those of water, are but of small extent *. Besides, fire would have destroyed bodies which water preserved; such as the tenderest shells, the skins of scaly fish, the fruits and leaves of vegetables. All these would bear drowning and burying, but could never survive the devastations of fire. How could fire transport the productions of all climates into one place? But if they floated on water, subject to winds, tides, and currents, such a thing might easily be: accordingly, we find the fruits of the East and West-Indies; bones, teeth, and shells from fish of different seas; the elephant of Africa, the tortoise of America, all near to one another in

* The effects of fire, compared with those of water, may perhaps be nearly in the same proportion, as the forge of the smith, with its flags and cinders, when compared with the lands of the whole parish.

the

the same spot *, as if laid up for a testimony to the truth of the Holy Scripture, which alone gives us a faithful account of this great revolution in nature. When we are informed, that the earth we now inhabit is the *burying-place* of a former earth, it is as reasonable that we should dig up the remains and ruins of it, as that we should find the bones and coffins of former generations in the earth of a church-yard.

Our subject will become more edifying, if we examine what use hath been made of some parts of it in the Scripture.

1. Thus, for example, every man is to consider himself as clay in the hands of a potter, and to submit himself, with resignation, to the appointment of God, who gives to all men their proper stations and uses in life, as the potter forms some vessels to mean, and some to honourable, offices; and it is as vain for any man to quarrel with the ordination of heaven, and throw himself out of that sphere of life in which God hath placed him, as for the clay to murmur against the design of the potter. There is an ancient fable of

* What is here said is verified in the island of *Sheepy* in *Kent*.

Eastern

Eastern original, (for the son of *Sirach* hath it *) which relates the folly of the vessel of earth in joining itself to the company of the vessel of brass; in consequence of which it was broken to pieces.

2. The treasures of the earth are buried within it; so that they cannot be discovered and brought forth without the labour of man: yet they are not placed so deep, as to render our labour ineffectual. Thus hath God ordained in every other case: nothing, but what is worthless, is to be found by the indolent upon the surface of life: every thing valuable must be obtained by labour; all wisdom, all science, all art and experience, are hidden at a proper depth, for the exercise of the wise; and they, who do not spare their labour, shall not be disappointed in their search. The treasures of wisdom, in the word of God, do not lie upon the surface of the letter, for every superficial reader to observe them: therefore, where it is said, *Search the Scriptures*, the word implies that laborious kind of searching, by which the treasures of the mine are discovered under ground.

* Ecclus. xiii. 3.

3. The

3. The properties of metals are very considerable, and would afford us much instruction, if the limits of this discourse would admit of it. As gold stands the test of fire, such is the constancy of true piety, which grows brighter and purer with every trial. And, as gold cannot be pure without being refined in the furnace, so cannot any man be fit for God's acceptance, till he hath first *endured temptation.* The father of the faithful was put to the fiery trial of offering up his own son for a sacrifice, that he might be an example to all his children; to whom this warning is given by the son of *Sirach, My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare they soul for temptation—for* gold *is* tried in the fire, *and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity* *. I suppose this rule to be so certain, that human life never did, nor ever will, admit an instance to the contrary.

4. In the vision of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the four great monarchies of the world are signified by the four principal metals, gold, silver, brass, and iron. The Assyrian monarchy has the pre-eminence, as well in dignity as in order of time, and is com-

* Ecclus. ii. 1—5.

pared

pared to gold. *Thou,* said the prophet Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar, *art this head of gold;* from which interpretation, his *image* of gold seems to have been presumptuously derived; the proud king, not content with being the head, assumed to himself the whole body of worldly empire.

As silver, brass, and iron, have less value than gold, the monarchies of Persia, Greece, and Rome, which succeeded, must have had less splendor and dignity than the Assyrian; and the Roman must have been the basest of all, if the Scripture is just in its comparison. If we were to enter into the question, how kingdoms are debased, we might obtain some light from the case of the Roman empire, as it is stated in this prophecy. This empire then, though strong as *iron* in war, was of a baser nature than those which preceded, because it was unnaturally compounded of *miry clay* mixed with its iron; which two would never incorporate. It was compounded of *military power* and *popular authority;* to unite which, all attempts were unsuccessful; and, consequently, with all that hardness of iron, with which it *bruised* and *broke in pieces* other nations, there was a constitutional weakness; by reason of which, it was vexed and broken

at

at home with eternal balancings and divisions: and, when it had conquered the world, it became its own executioner. The words of this prophecy are very remarkable, when applied to the character and constitution of the Roman state. It was *partly strong* as iron in military force, and *partly broken*, from this unnatural mixture in the materials of its government. By the mingling of *iron* with *miry clay*, as it is interpreted for us by the prophet, it was signified, that they of this kingdom should *mingle themselves with the seed of men, and not cleave to one another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.* Imperial power, in the Scripture, is a divine institution, of heavenly original; and to suppose it an human thing, and derive it from the power of the people, as the Romans did, is to mingle it with the seed of men, and debase the nature of it; of which the certain consequence is disunion and weakness: for no state can be strong in itself, which is founded on principles subversive of God's authority. Under the Assyrian monarchy and the Persian, and the kingdoms of Greece, in the age of Homer, there was no question concerning the origin of power; it arose afterwards amongst the Greeks; and the popular scheme attained its highest degree

of absurdity under the Romans. Would to God it had never found its way amongst Christians; where it has done infinite mischief, and will probably continue so to do, till it has undermined the peace of all mankind, and unhinged the whole political world! Majesty, when it is in kings, is where God hath placed it: honour is then in the fountain of honour; but the *majesty of the people*, which the enthusiastic vanity of the Romans hath so magnified, and in which they have been followed, for selfish ends, by libertines and deistical philosophers, is contrary to all the ideas of revelation, and is inconsistent with common sense. A *people* may seem to themselves to rise higher, as the *power of government* sinks lower; but it is all a deception; for nothing can be more evident than that nations are debased in the estimation of the world, by the doctrines of anarchy. For which of the two is the most respectable; the house wherein there is a proper respect kept up; or that where there is none? The family of the nobleman, whose domestics are under his authority, preserves an appearance of greatness and elegance: but the publick house, where the people who fill it are upon a

level

level with the householder, is a scene of vulgarity and disorder.

5. And now, what should be the end of all our researches into Nature and the Scripture, but to delight in giving God the honour that is due to him? For his pleasure all things were made; and he will be pleased with men when they glorify him in his works. We should therefore call upon all nature to join with us in a Psalm of praise and thanksgiving, after the example of the royal prophet: *Praise the Lord, ye mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars, beasts and all cattle—Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad; for the name of the Lord is excellent, and his praise is above heaven and earth.*

To Him therefore, &c.

SERMON IV.

FOR THE INVISIBLE THINGS OF HIM FROM THE CREATION OF THE WORLD ARE CLEARLY SEEN, BEING UNDERSTOOD BY THE THINGS THAT ARE MADE, EVEN HIS ETERNAL POWER AND GODHEAD;—ROM. I. 20.

THE wisdom of God in the natural creation, is a proper subject of the lecture delivered in this place upon this occasion *: but as the knowledge of the Scriptures is not excluded, I may be permitted to bring them both together into one discourse: for they illustrate one another in a wonderful manner: and he who can understand God as the foun-

* This Sermon was preached at *St. Leonard's, Shoreditch*, on Tuesday, in Whitsun Week, 1787, on Mr. Fairchild's Foundation.

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tain of truth, and the Saviour of men, in the holy Scripture, will be better disposed to understand and adore him as the fountain of power and goodness in the natural creation.

To those who search for it, and have pleasure in receiving it, there is a striking alliance between the œconomy of Nature, and the principles of divine Revelation; and unless we study both together, we shall we liable to mistake things now, as the unbelieving Sadducees did, in their vain reasonings with our blessed Saviour. They *erred, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God:* they neither understood them separately, nor knew how to compare them together.

Men eminently learned, and worthy of all commendation, have excelled in demonstrating the wisdom of God from the works of Nature; but in this one respect they seem to have been deficient; in that they have but rarely turned their arguments to the particular advantage of the Christian Revelation, by bringing the volume of Nature in aid to the volume of the Scripture; as the times now call upon us to do: for we have been threatened, in very indecent and insolent language of late years, with the superior reasonings and forces of natural philosophy; as

if our late researches into Nature had put some new weapons into the hands of Infidelity, which the friends of the Christian Religion will be unable to stand against. One writer, in particular, who is the most extravagant in his philosophical flights, seems to have persuaded himself, and would persuade us, that little more is required to overthrow the whole faith and œconomy of the Church of England, than a philosophical apparatus; and that every prelate and priest amongst us hath reason to tremble at the sight. This is not the voice of piety or learning, but of vapouring vanity and delusion. Neither a *Bacon*, nor a *Boyle*, nor a *Newton* would ever have descended to such language, so contrary to their good manners and religious sentiments: the first of whom hath wisely observed, that the works of God minister a singular help and preservative against unbelief and error: our Saviour, as he saith, having laid before us two books or volumes to study; first the *Scriptures*, revealing the *will* of God, and then the *creatures*, expressing his *power*; whereof the *latter* is *a key unto the former* *. Such was the piety and penetration of this

* See Bacon's Adv. of Learning, B. 1.

great

great man. However, let us not take it amiss, that, at certain times, we are rudely attacked and insulted. Christians, under the temptations of ease and security, would forget themselves, and go to sleep: they are therefore obliged to their adversaries for disturbing them, that they may awake, like *Samson*, and discover their own strength. So little reason have we in fact to be terrified with the threatenings of our adversaries, that we invite them to enter with us upon a comparison between the word and the works of God. For it will be found true, as I shall endeavour to shew, that *the invisible things of God*, that is, the things concerning his Being and his Power, and the œconomy of his spiritual kingdom, which are the objects of our faith, are *clearly seen from the creation of the world*, and *understood by the things that are made.*

Having much matter to propose, I must not indulge myself in the use of any superfluous words. A plain and unadorned discourse will be accepted rather for the meaning than the form: and as I am about to consider the works of God in a new capacity, I must bespeak your attention, not without a degree of your candour also, to excuse an adven-

turous excursion into an unfrequented path of divinity.

Let us enquire then, how the religious state of man, and the spiritual kingdom of God, as the scriptures have made them known to us; that is, how Christianity, as a scheme of doctrine, agrees with the works of God, and the œconomy of Nature? In consequence of which it will be found, that the Christian Religion hath the attestation of natural philosophy; and that every other religion hath it not.

Our Bible teaches us these great principles or doctrines: that man is now in a fallen state of forfeiture under Sin and Death, and suffering the penalties of disobedience: that, as a religious being, he is the scholar of heaven, and must be taught of God; that the Almighty Father of men and angels gives him life and salvation by his Word and Spirit; in other words, by Christ and the Holy Ghost: that there is danger to us from the malignity and power of evil spirits: that a curse hath been inflicted upon the earth by a flood of water: that there is no remission of sin without shedding of blood; and that a divine life is supported in us by partaking of the death of Christ in the Paschal or Sacramental

mental Feast of the Lord's table; that there is a restoration to life after death by a resurrection of the body; and lastly, that the world which we inhabit shall be destroyed by fire.

These are the principles, at least the chief of them, which are peculiar to the scriptures. He that believes them is a Christian: and if the works and ways of nature have a correspondence with these principles, and with no other, then ought every natural philosopher to be a Christian believer.

I. Let us proceed then to examine how the case stands. The unbelieving philosopher supposes man to be in the same state of perfection now, as when he came from the hands of his Creator. But the infirmities of his mind, with the diseases and death of his body, proclaim the contrary. When the death of man is from the hand of man, according to the laws of justice, it is an execution: and it is the same in its nature, when inflicted upon all men by the hands of a just God. The moral history of man informs us, that he offended God by eating in sin. His natural history shews us, that, in consequence of it, he now eats in labour and sorrow. The world is full of toil and trouble: and for what end,

end, but that man may earn his daily bread? The hands of the husbandman are hardened, and his back is bowed down with the cultivation of the earth. Thorns and thistles prevail against him, and multiply his labour. While some are toiling upon the earth, others are doomed to work underneath it. Some are exercised and wasted with works of heat: some for a livelihood are exposed to the storms and perils of the sea: and they who are called to the dangers of war, support their lives at the hazard of losing them.

The woman, who was first in the transgression, is distinguished by sorrows peculiar to her sex; and if some are exempt, they are exceptions which confirm the general law; and shew, that the penalty doth not follow by any necessity of Nature, but is inflicted.

Many are the unavoidable sorrows of life; but if we consider how many more are brought upon man *by himself*, it is plain his *mind* is not right: for if he had his sight and his senses, he would see better and avoid them.

Suppose human nature to be perfect; what is the consequence? We not only contradict our own daily experience; but we supersede the use of Christianity, by denying the existence of those *evils*, for which only it is provided.

vided. The whole system of it is offered to us as a cure for the consequences of the fall. From the accommodation of its graces, gifts, and sacraments to the wants of our nature, we have a demonstration that our minds are in a distempered and sinful state: as the drugs and instruments in the shop of the surgeon are so many arguments that our bodies are frail and mortal.

II. The scriptures declare farther, that man, thus born in sin and sorrow, would grow up in darkness and ignorance, as to all heavenly things, unless he were taught of God: whose word is therefore said to be a light. The case is the same in nature. For how doth man receive the knowledge of all distant objects? not by a light within himself, but by a light which comes to him from heaven, and brings to his sight a sense of the objects from which it is reflected. What an uninformed empty being would man become in his bodily state: how destitute of the knowledge of all remote objects? not by light within himself, but by a light which comes to him from heaven, and brings to his sight a sense of the objects to which it is reflected. What an uninformed empty being would man become in his bodily state: how destitute of the know-

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ledge of all remote objects, but for the rays of light which come to him from without? Such would he be in his religious capacity without the light of revelation, which was therefore sent out into all lands, as the light of the sun is diffused throughout the world: *The people that walked in darkness* (which is the state we are born to) *have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined* *. The scriptures declare that we are in a state of stupidity and death, till we are illuminated by the Gospel: *Awake thou that sleepest, and rise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light* †. But they cannot make our souls worse than our bodies would be without the visible lights of heaven; and therefore in this respect, the physical state of man answers precisely to his religious state; and if we duly observe and reflect upon the one, we must admit the other also, or oppose the testimony of our senses.

III. The gospel informs us, that there is a light of life to the soul of man, and a divine spirit of God which quickens and inspires; and that the whole œconomy of grace is ad-

* Isa. ix. 2. † Eph. v. 14.

ministered

ministered to us by the persons of the Son and the Holy Ghost. And are not the principles of man's natural life maintained by a parallel agency in nature? Do we not there also find a light to animate, and a spirit to inspire and give us breath? The divine spirit, from his nature and office, takes his name from the air or natural spirit of the world, which supplies us with the breath of life. On the day of Pentecost he descended from heaven under the outward sign of a rushing mighty wind; that from his philosophical emblem we might understand his nature and operations; who, like the wind, is invisible, irresistible, the medium of life and the inspirer of the prophets and apostles, who all spake as the *spirit gave them utterance.* The air is the instrument of speech, and the vehicle of sound. Such was the divine spirit to the apostles; by whose aid and operation, *their sound went out into all lands.* The ways of the Spirit of God in the birth of man unto grace, are hidden from us: we distinguish him only by his effects: so it is in nature; we hear the sound of the wind, but we cannot tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth. Thus did our Saviour himself illustrate the operations of the Holy Ghost from those of the air: and,

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what is very remarkable, he communicated the Holy Ghost to his disciples under the outward sign of *breathing upon them.*

In the invisible kingdom of God, there is a *sun of righteousness* which rises upon a world that lieth in darkness; raising up the dead to a new life, and restoring all that sin and death had destroyed. So doth the visible world present to us the great luminary of the day, whose operations are in all respects like to those of the sun of righteousness. In the morning it prevails over darkness, and in the spring it restores the face of Nature.

When the scriptures say that the powers of the word and spirit of God are necessary to the souls of men; they say no more than what the most scrupulous philosophy must admit in regard to their bodies: for certainly mankind cannot subsist without the sun and the air. They must have light, to *live* by as well as to *see* by; and they must have breath, without which they can neither live, nor speak, nor hear.

We are to argue farther; that as we must suppose a sun to shine before we can suppose a man to exist upon earth: so, by parity of reason, the divine light was pre-existent to all those who are saved by it: and to presume that

that Jesus Christ, who is that light, is only a man like ourselves, is as false in divinity, as it would be false in philosophy to report the sun in the heavens as a thing of yesterday, and formed like ourselves out of the dust of the ground. Doth not philosophy teach us, that the elementary powers of light and air are in nature supreme and sovereign? for, is there any thing above them? Is there a sun above the sun that rules the day; and is there a spirit above the wind that gives us breath? therefore, so are the persons of Christ and the Holy Ghost supreme and divine in the invisible kingdom of God. If not, it must lead us into idolatry and blasphemy, when we see them represented to us in the scripture by these sovereign powers in nature. *God is Light*, and *God is a Spirit;* therefore, that person who is called *the Spirit* must be divine; and Jesus Christ who is *the true Light* must be *the true God.*

Wheresoever we go in divinity, thither will philosophy still follow us as a faithful witness. For if we are assured by revelation, that there is a power of divine justice to execute vengeance on the enemies of God, and which shall destroy with a fearful destruction the ungodly and impenitent whenever it shall reach

reach them: we find in nature the irresistible power of fire, which dissipates and destroys what it acts upon, and which in many instances hath been applied as the instrument of vengeance upon wicked men. Sacrifices were consumed by fire, to signify that wrath from heaven is due to sin, and would fall upon the sinful offerer himself, if the victim did not receive it for him by substitution. When the law was given on Mount Sinai, the heavens flamed with fire, and the mountain burned below, to give the people a sense of the terrors of divine judgment. With allusion to which exhibition, and other examples of the actual effects of his wrath, God is said to be *a consuming fire:* and happy are they who *regard the power* of it, and *flee from it*, as Lot and his family fled from the flames of Sodom.

IV. Another doctrine, peculiar to the scripture, is, the danger to which we are exposed in our religious capacity from the malignity and power of the Devil; whose works are manifest, though he himself is invisible. But the natural creation bears witness to his existence, and to all his evil properties; where the wisdom of God hath set before us that creature the Serpent, a singular phænomenon of

of the same kind; whose bite diffuses death so suddenly and miraculously through the body, that he may be said, in comparison of all other creatures, to have the *power of death.* He is double tongued and insidious; often undiscovered till he has given the fatal wound. In a word, he is such a pattern of the invisible adversary of mankind, who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning, that the hieroglyphical language of the Bible speaks of him in the history of the first temptation, under the name of *the Serpent.* The wicked who are related to him as his *seed* or *children,* are called a *generation of vipers*; by which figurative phrase it is literally meant, that they were *of their father the Devil.*

In the modern systems and schemes of those who affect the philosophical character, we are not always sure of finding a God: but we are sure never to find a Devil: for as the Heathens of old offered sacrifices to him without understanding that they did so; in like manner do some people of these days work under him without knowing him. Yet certainly, the scripture, by its application of the word *Serpent* to the *Tempter* who brought Sin and Death into the world, hath referred us to the natural creation for the properties

of the Serpent-kind: and from those properties every naturalist may learn what the Devil is, and what we have to fear from him, more accurately and effectually than any words can teach. What he finds in the natural Serpent he must apply to another invisible Serpent, who can think and reason and dispute the veracity of God; which the common Serpent never could. How came so fearful and cursed a creature into the works of God? Certainly for the wisest end: that men might understand and abhor and avoid the enemy of their salvation. The world was made, as the Scriptures were written, for our learning; and unless the Serpent were found in it, there would be a blank in the creation, and we should have been to seek for some ideas, which are of the last importance to the mind of man.

Other ideas, nearly related, may indeed be collected from the contrariety between light and darkness; with their figurative alliance to moral good and evil. The power of Satan hath the like effect on men's souls as darkness hath upon their bodies; and the scripture calls it the *power of darkness.* If the enemies of God's religion are called the *seed of the Serpent*, in opposition to the sons of God; so

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are they also represented to us as children of darkness, in opposition to the children of light. *What communion*, saith St. Paul, *hath light with darkness; what concord hath Christ with Belial; or what part hath he that believeth with an Infidel?* The ancient Persians, who were given to speculate as Philosophers on the principles of their Theology, argued from the course of Nature, that there are two contrary principles of Good and Evil in the world of Spirits: that there is a malignant power acting in opposition to the benign goodness of the Creator, as darkness, in the vicissitudes of day and night, holds divided empire with light. Which speculations, properly corrected, are agreeable to the imagery of the scripture; in which the author of evil is called the *power of darkness;* and, in his capacity of a destroyer, is compared to lightning, which, like Lucifer, *falls from heaven* to do mischief upon earth.

V. Another doctrine of Revelation is the execution of a curse by the waters of a flood; which obliges us to examine how it agrees with the natural history of the earth. It was impossible to know that this catastrophe was universal, but by Revelation; but when known, it is confirmed as a fact by the same proofs of

it occurring to us in every part of the known world. The curvatures, furrows, and channels, on the whole face of the earth, open to common observation, are so many marks and monuments of the forcible effects of descending waters. The relics, fragments, and bones of marine productions, every where found under the earth, shew that the sea covered the land, and that the present world, on which we now live, is the burying-ground of a former, on which that curse was executed, which God pronounced at the beginning. The natural history of the earth, as bearing this testimony to the Flood of Noah, has been very troublesome to our Infidel-Philosophers; and the improbability and weakness of some theories, with the wild extravagance of others, advanced to disguise this plain fact, shew that its evidence is stubborn and untractable.

VI. The derivation of a principle of life from the death of Christ, and the remission of sin by the shedding of his innocent blood, are doctrines essential to the Gospel, and every way agreeable to the condition of man's natural life: for we live by the death of innocent animals, who lay down their lives for our sustenance, not for any fault of their own. Such creatures as are hurtful, and not fit to live,

live, are not fit for us to eat. The act of killing clean beasts in sacrifice, and the sprinkling of their blood, and the feasting upon their flesh, had undoubtedly an intended correspondence with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and the support of our spiritual life by a participation of his death. The whole institution was prophetical, and the scriptures are copious in the application of it. And though the act of slaughtering innocent creatures is not now a religious act, as it used to be, the *rationale* of it is still the same; and it will speak the same language to the end of the world; it will always be declaratory of the salvation of man by the death of an universal sacrifice. The insensible people who trade in the slaughter of innocent animals, and shed their blood by profession; and they who feed upon them by daily custom, never think of this: but the universal practice of mankind speaks, without their understanding it, that which Caiaphas prophesied without knowing what he said, *it is expedient that one man die, that the whole people perish not.* It is expedient that the innocent should die to feed our bodies: let any man deny it if he can: and it is equally expedient, that Jesus Christ should die to feed our souls.

Some philosophers of antiquity, ignorant of the terms man is now upon with his Maker, refined upon the traditional rites of sacrifice and the priesthood, (which are nearly as ancient as the world) and reasoned themselves into an abhorrence of animal food. They exclaimed against the use of it, as barbarous, and unworthy of a rational creature: especially as the lot falls upon the most inoffensive of animals, whose dispositions and services have a claim upon us for kindness and protection. But these are doomed to die by the wise appointment of God, and by these men live; as Jesus Christ the righteous, with the meekness and innocence of the *Lamb*, was *brought to the slaughter*; that through his death we might have life eternal.

VII. The resurrection of the body, which comes next in order, is no where taught but in the scriptures. The apparatus of the philosopher can furnish no argument against it: and God's apparatus is clearly on the side of it. For if it be examined by the light of Nature, that is, by the light reflected from natural things, it becomes a reasonable, and almost a natural doctrine.

It is evident that man's body was made of the dust of the earth, because we see that it returns

returns into earth again. Philosophy therefore may argue, that as God formed man's body of the dust at first, he can as easily restore and raise it from the same afterwards. That he will actually do this is promised to us in the scripture; and on that promise Nature is giving us a lecture every day of our lives. Many animals, after a torpid state, scarcely distinguishable from death, recover the powers of life at the proper season by the influence of the sun: some after submersion in water during the whole winter. Some crawl for a time as helpless worms upon the earth, like ourselves; then they retire into a covering, which answers the end of a coffin, or a sepulchre, wherein they are invisibly transformed, and come forth in glorious array, with wings and painted plumes, more like the inhabitants of heaven, than such worms as they were in their former earthly state. This transformation is so striking and pleasant an emblem of the present, the intermediate, and the glorified states of man, that people of the most remote antiquity, when they buried their dead, embalmed and inclosed them in an artificial covering, so figured and painted as to resemble the caterpillar, or silk-worm, in the intermediate state: and as Joseph was the first we

read of that was embalmed in Egypt, where this manner prevailed, it was very probably of Hebrew original.

The vicissitudes of night and day instructs us farther on the same subject. The sun sets to rise again; the year dies away into the winter, and rises to verdure and beauty in the spring. Sleep is a temporary death from which we daily awake; insomuch that in many passages of the scripture, sleep and death are the same thing, and he that *rises from the dead* is said to *awake out of sleep* *. The furrow of the field is a grave, out of which the seeds that are buried rise to a new and better state. Their death and burial, which seems to be their end, is the beginning of their life: *It is not quickened except it die.* The allusion to plants and seeds is very common in the scripture, to illustrate the present and future state of man: and if it reminds us, that *all flesh is grass,* and *all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field;* it makes us amends, by assuring us, that *our bones shall flourish as an herb,* and that every *seed shall* have *its own body.*

VIII. The destruction of the world by fire is the last doctrine I shall take occasion to

* See Daniel xii. 2.

speak

speak of: which, though never unreasonable, and admitted even by Heathens of old time, is now more apparent than ever, from the late improvements in experimental philosophy. Indeed, we may say, the world is already on fire: for as Sinai, with its smoke and flame, was a *positive*, so is every volcano a *natural* prelude to the burning of the last day. The earth, the air, the clouds, the sea, are all replete with a subtile penetrating fire, which, while at rest, is neither felt nor observed, and was absolutely unknown to some of the most learned for ages; till accidental discovery hath now laid open the treasures of fire in heaven and earth to all that have the use of their sight and senses. The publication of the philosophy of fire hath been so sudden and so universal, and is so wonderful in itself, that it seems to be second to the publication of the Gospel: at least, there is no event in philosophy or literature that comes near to it.

In this element we live and move; and, perhaps, so far as our frame is mechanical, we are moved by it. When excited to action, it turns into a consuming fire, which no substance can exclude, no force can resist. The matter of lightning, which seems to break out partially

partially and accidentally, is now found to be constitutional and universal in the system of Nature: so that the heavens, which, according to the language of the scripture, are to *melt with fervent heat*, want no foreign matter to convert them into fire. What is called *phlogiston* can rise in a moment from a state of quiescence to a state of inflammation; and it discovers itself in many bodies where we should little expect to find it. The earth, and the works that are therein, carry within them the seeds of their own destruction; and may be burnt up by that element which now resides within them, and is only waiting for the word from its Creator.

Upon the whole then, philosophy, so far as the term signifies a knowledge of God's wisdom and power in the natural creation, which is the best sense of the word; this philosophy, I say, is so far from being adverse to true religion, that with all the common evidences of Christianity in reserve, we may venture to meet the philosopher upon his own ground: we have nothing to fear from the testimony of Nature: we appeal to it: we call upon every man of science to compare the gospel which God hath revealed, with the world which God hath created; under an assurance, that

that he will find *the latter* to be *a key unto the former*, as our noble philosopher hath well asserted. We have ventured to try this comparison upon the general plan of Christianity, and we see how it answers.

And if Nature answers to Christianity, it contradicts Deism: and that religion cannot be called *natural* which is contradicted by the light reflected upon our understandings from natural things. The Socinian is nearly in the same situation with the Deist: and they may both join together in calling upon Nature, from morning until night, as the Priests of Baal called upon their Deity; but there will be *none to answer;* and philosophy must put out one of his eyes before it can admit their doctrines. In short, take any religion but the Christian, and bring it to this test, by comparing it with the state of Nature, and it will be found destitute and defenceless. But the doctrines of our faith are attested by the whole natural world. Wherever we turn our eyes, to the heaven or to the earth, to the sea or the land, to men or to beasts, to animals or to plants, there we are reminded of them. They are recorded in a language which hath never been confounded: they are written in a text which shall never be corrupted.

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The Creation of God is the School of Christians, if they use it aright. What is commonly called *the World*, consists of the forms, manners, diversions, pursuits, and prospects, of human society. But this is an artificial world, of man's making; the subject of his study, the object of his ambition. The natural world, of God's making, is full of wonder and instruction; it is open to all, it is common to all. Here there can be no envy, no party, no competition; for no man will have the less for what his neighbour possesses. The world, in this sense, may be enjoyed without fraud or violence. The student in his solitary walk, the husbandman at his labour, the saint at his prayers, may have as much as they can desire, and have nothing to repent of: for they will thus draw nearer to God, because they will see farther into his truth, wisdom, and goodness.

Some have expressed their astonishment at the choice of hermits, and men of retirement, as people who have fled from all the enjoyments of life, and consigned themselves to melancholy and misery. They are out of the world, it is true; but they are only out of that artificial world of man's making, in which so many are hastening to disappointment and ruin:

ruin: but they are still in that other better world of contemplation and devotion, which affords them all the pleasures and improvements of the mind, and is preparatory to a state of uninterrupted felicity.

Let us then, finally, give thanks to him, who to the light of his gospel hath added this light of nature, and opened the wonderful volume of the creation before us, for the confirmation of his truth, and the illumination of his people; that we may thence know and see *the certainty of those things wherein we have been instructed.* As all his works are for our good, let it be our study and our wisdom to turn them all to his glory.

SERMON

SERMON V.

SING TO THE HARP WITH A PSALM OF THANKSGIVING. PSALM XCVIII. 6.

THESE words, like many others in the Psalms of David, assert and encourage the use of music, both vocal and instrumental, in the worship of God: the propriety and benefits of which will be evident from such an examination of the subject, as the present occasion may well admit of: and I hope the good affections of my hearers will be as ready to enter into a rational consideration of the nature and uses of music, as their ears are to be delighted with music. For this art is a great and worthy object to the understanding of man: it is wonderful in itself; and, in its proper and best use, it may be reckoned amongst the several means of grace, which God

God in his abundant goodness hath vouchsafed to his church; some to direct our course through this vale of tears, and some to cheer and support us under the trials and labours of it.

Music will need no other recommendation to our attention as an important subject, when it shall be understood, as I mean to shew in the first place, that it derives its origin from God himself: whence it will follow, that so far as it is God's work, it is his property, and may certainly be applied as such to his service. The question will be, whether it may be applied to any thing else.

What share soever man may seem to have in modifying, all that is found in this world to delight the senses is primarily the work of God. Wine is prepared by human labour: but it is given to us in the grape by the Creator. The prismatic glass is the work of art; but the glorious colours which it exhibits to the eye are from him who said, *Let there be light*. Man is the contriver of musical instruments; but the principles of harmony are in the elements of nature; and the greatest of instruments, as we shall soon discover, was formed by the Creator himself. The element of air was as certainly ordained to give us harmonious

monious sounds in due measure, as to give respiration to the lungs. This fluid is so constituted as to make thousands of pulses at an invariable rate, by means of which the proportions and co-incidences of musical sounds are exactly preserved. The same wisdom which established the seven conspicuous lights of the firmament, which gave names to the periodical measure of time in a week; and which hath distinguished the seven primary colours in the element of light, hath given the same limits to the scale of musical degrees, all the varieties of which are comprehended within the number seven.

In the philosophical theory of musical sounds, we discover some certain laws which demonstrate that the divine wisdom hath had respect, and made provision for the delight of our senses, by accommodating the nature of sounds to the degree of our perception. As this must be a pleasing consideration to the lovers of music, I shall beg leave to enlarge upon it.

There is no such thing in music as a simple or solitary sound. Every musical note, whether from a string, a pipe, or a bell, is attended by other smaller notes which arise out of it. When a string sounds in its whole length, the parts

parts also sound in such sections or divisions as have a certain proportion to the total sound. We find by calculation and experiment, that these measures are harmonious in the greater of them, but that in the lesser they run into discords. Now herein is the wisdom and goodness of God manifest; that these sounds are so attempered to the sensibility of the human ear, that we feel all the pleasant without any part of the disagreeable effect. Were the ear more sensible, or these discords louder, all music would be spoiled.

There is another providential circumstance in the theory of sounds, that if a pipe is blown to give its proper note, a stronger blast will raise it to its octave (8 notes higher.) This is done by an instantaneous leap, which if it were done by procession from the one to the other, as bodies in motion rise or fall, not music, but a *noise* would be the consequence, most disagreeable to the ear; to which nothing is more offensive than a sound rising or falling by the way of the whole intermediate space, and not by just intervals; for that is a principle of *noises* as they differ from notes: and a curious principle it is, if this were a proper occasion for pursuing it. We find music as a work of God in the constitution of

the air; which is made capable of proportionate vibrations to delight us; and in such degree and manner as to save the ear from offence and interruption.

Music may be farther traced as the work of God in the nature of man: for God hath undoubtedly made man to sing as well as to speak. The gift of speech we cannot but derive from the Creator; and the gift of singing is from the same Author. The faculty, by which the voice forms musical sounds, is as wonderful as the flexures of the organs of speech in the articulation of words. The human pipe is of a small diameter, and very short when compared with the pipes of an organ: yet it will distinctly give the same note with the pipe of an organ eight feet in length. The moveable operculum on the pipe of the human throat, which is imitated by the reed of the organ, has but a very small range: yet with the contraction and expansion of the throat, it will utter a scale of seventeen degrees, and divide every whole tone into an hundred parts; which is such a refinement on mechanism as exceeds all description.

But, more than this, man is an instrument of God in his whole frame. Besides the powers of the voice in forming, and of the ear in distinguishing

tinguishing musical sounds, there is a general sense, or sympathetic feeling, in the fibres and membranes of the body, which renders the whole frame susceptible of musical emotion. Every person strongly touched with music must be assured that its effect is not confined to the ear, but is felt all over the frame, and to the inmost affections of the heart; disposing us to joy and thankfulness on the one hand, or to penitential softness and devotion on the other. Whence it follows, that when words convey to the mind the same sense as the music does, and dispose us to the same affection, then the effect of music is greatest; which consideration at once gives, to vocal, the pre-eminence above instrumental music.

It is a very observable experiment in music, that when one stringed instrument is struck, and another in tune with it is held upon the palm of the hand, it will be felt to tremble in all its solid parts. Thus doth the frame of man feel and answer to instruments of music, as one instrument answers to another.

Man is to be considered as a musical instrument of God's forming; he has music in his voice, in his ear, and in his whole frame. Hence the Psalmist, when he calls upon the lute and harp to awake, hath rightly added,

I myself, an instrument which God hath formed for his own use, *will awake right early:* I will utter, and I will feel such sounds as are worthy of a soul awakened to the praise and glory of God.

Now we have derived music from its proper origin, we are to consider the end which it is intended to answer. The mind of man is subject to certain emotions, which language alone is not sufficient to express; so it calls in the aid of bodily gestures and musical sounds, by which it attains to an higher kind of expression, more adequate to its inward feelings. In prayer, words alone are not adequate to the affections of the soul: so the eyes are lifted up to the everlasting hills, the knees are bent, and the body falls prostrate upon the dust, to denote the prostration of the mind. So naturally are the knees bended, and the hands folded together, when we are imploring the divine forgiveness, that the word *supplication* is taken from thence. In joy and thanksgiving, the tongue is not content with speaking; it must awake and utter a song; while the feet are also disposed to dance to the measures of music; as was the custom in sacred celebrities of old among the people of God, before the world and its vanities had engrossed

engrossed to themselves all the expressions of mirth and festivity. They have now left nothing of that kind to religion; which must sit by in gloomy solemnity, and see the world, the flesh, and the devil, assume to themselves the sole power of distributing social happiness. When the holy prophet David danced before the ark of God, Michal scorned him in her heart, as if he was exposing himself, and robbing the vain world of its tributary right: for which she was barren to the day of her death; as all they are likely to be in their hearts, who are either ashamed of the condescension, or can find nothing chearful and pleasant in the worship of the God of Israel. However this may be, it must be admitted, that nothing adds so fully to the expression of joy, as the sound of instruments accompanying the voice.

When the mind is intent upon some great object, then all the aids of speech are called for. They are, therefore, never so proper and necessary as in the praises of God, the best and the greatest. *When you glorify the Lord,* (saith the son of Sirach) *exalt him as much as you can; and when ye exalt him, put forth all your strength, and be not weary, for you can*

never go far enough. Ecclus. xliii. 30. Here music appears in its proper character: but to call in the assistance of great sounds to magnify little or worthless things, is absurd and ridiculous. The powers of speech are more than they deserve: but certainly, laborious celebration, when dedicated to trifles, is to the reproach of human judgment. The winds of heaven, and the waves of the ocean, which can transport the loftiest ships, were not intended to float a cork, or to drive a feather. When the highest music is applied to the highest objects, then we act with reason and propriety, and bring honour to ourselves, while we are promoting the honour of our Maker. If a musician has any sense of great things, they must lead him to higher performances in his art than little things: they call for an higher sort of expression; and accordingly we find, in fact, that masters have exceeded themselves when their talents have been turned to divine subjects in the service of the church; in whose archives are to be found the most sublime and excellent of all musical compositions. What is the sense and subject of the most perfect piece of music in the world, but the humiliation of man, and

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the exaltation of God? *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name be the glory!* In truth, there is nearly the same proportion between the music of the church and the music of secular assemblies, as between the venerable Gothic aile of the cathedral and the common chamber; and there is the like difference in their effects upon the mind; for its elevation and enlargement are better than its levity; and *rapture* is above *mirth.*

It may have been made a question by some people, more melancholy than wise, and soured with the principles of spurious reformation, whether instrumental music may be lawfully applied to divine worship. But it is no question at all. The voices of men are to speak the praises of God: but not they alone. Every devout and well-informed mind hears the whole frame of nature, the world and all things that are therein, joining in one great instrumental chorus to the glory of the Creator. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad—let the sea make a noise, and all that therein is; let the floods clap their hands—let the field be joyful, let the vallies sing—let all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord. This is a grand sentiment, sufficient to overpower and confound all the sullen objections

of enthusiastic melancholy *, and to awaken the stupidity of indevotion itself. Here the whole inanimate creation is musical; and the thought hath been plainly borrowed by our best poet in his supposed hymn of Adam and Eve in Paradise; which will naturally occur to the memory of those who are acquainted with it. Sounds from inanimate bodies, such as musical instruments, are, therefore, undoubtedly to be used in divine worship; and all ages and nations of the world have admitted them. On occasion of the overthrow of Pharaoh and his host, Miriam the prophetess took a timbrel in her hand to celebrate the glorious triumph of the Lord. In the service of the tabernacle and temple, all kinds of instruments were used, and bands of singers and musicians were appointed in so great a multitude, that their sound must have produced an astonishing effect. A father of the church informs us, that the music of the temple, on great occasions, from the multitude of performers, and the elevation of the place,

* Amongst other laws, equally extravagant, established in a Democratical province of fanatics in America, we find the following: "No man shall keep Christmas, read the Common Prayer, eat minced pies, or play on any instrument, except the drum, trumpet, and Jews-harp."

was

was heard to the distance of ten miles. That the songs of Sion were usually accompanied by the harp, according to the exhortation in the text, appears from the 137th Psalm. Even the Heathens, in their sacred festivals, retained the use of instrumental music. When the golden image was set up in the plain of Dura, the signal was given for the act of adoration by the sound of all kinds of instruments.

In the lowest state of the church, when the sufferings of our blessed Saviour were at hand, himself and the company of his disciples still followed the custom of adding music to their devotions; they *sung an hymn*. Pliny, the minister of the emperor Trajan, tells his master how the first Christians made it their practice to sing *hymns to Jesus Christ, as to God*. We are surely not to wonder, if instruments were not used while the church was in an afflicted and persecuted state: it could have no organs when it had no public edifices to put them in, supposing them to have been then in use: but when the church was supported and established by the kingdoms of the world, it assumed a like form of worship with that which prevailed in the prosperous days of David and Solomon.

We

We find organs in the church as early as the seventh century, near 1200 years ago. And here let all the admirers of the musical art stop a while to reflect with gratitude and devotion, that the invention of choral harmony in parts arose from the Trinitarian worship of the Christian church. It is certain, we have no music of that form extant in the world, but such as is Christian; nor do we read of any: and had it not been for the schools of music, established and maintained by the church, I will venture to say, there had, at this day, been none of that excellent music with which all of us are now charmed, and I hope, many of us edified. Look out of Christendom into the kingdoms of China, Tartary, Turkey, and the regions of the southern world, and you will discover no music but what is beggarly and barbarous, fit only to amuse the ears of children or savages. Every thing that is great and excellent in this way, hath come down to us from the Christian church. O holy and blessed society, which hath thus introduced us to all that we can know and feel of heaven itself! How shall we celebrate thee, how shall we cultivate and adorn thee, according to what we have derived from thee! Let others

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be cold and indifferent, if they will, to our forms of worship; but upon musicians, if they know themselves, religion hath a particular demand; for they would never have been what they are, if God in his infinite goodness, had not brought us to the improvements of the gospel,

If we proceed now to enquire, what are the subjects to which music may be applied, we shall find the chief of them set down for us in the 33d Psalm; where the righteous are directed to praise the Lord with instruments of music, because *his word is true, and all his works are faithful.* The wisdom of his word, and the wonders of his works, are, therefore, to be celebrated in our sacred songs; he is to be praised as the defender of his people, giving victory to their arms against their heathen enemies; feeding, healing, and delivering out of all danger those who trust in him, as their help and their shield. To all these subjects music may be applied; and this is the use we may make of it in the Te Deum, and all the hymns of the morning and evening service; to the words of which, such strains of harmony are adapted in this our Church of England, that the world cannot shew the like.

But

But as the mind has another language of sighs and tears, very different from that of praise and triumph, so the scale of music affords us a melancholy key with the lesser third, and a mournful sort of harmony proceeding by semi-tones, which is exceedingly fine and solemn, and reaches to the bottom of the soul, as the lighter sort of music plays upon the top of it. That musical sounds are applicable to prayer and supplication and penitential sorrow, none will doubt, who hears the Anthem, *I call and cry;* or that other, *Call to remembrance, O Lord;* by two of our most ancient and excellent composers*: or that versicle of the Burial Office, *Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts,* by the greatest of modern masters†. Thus much for the subjects of music.

The form of the Anthem derives itself naturally from the structure of some of the Psalms, in which we so frequently find the soliloquy, the dialogue, and the chorus. Thus, for example:—*The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble,* is the voice of a company encouraging a priest in his intercession; who also answers for himself, and expresses his confi-

* Tallis and Farrant. † Purcel.

dence;

dence; *Now know I that the Lord helpeth his anointed:* then all join together in supplication; *Save Lord, and hear us when we call upon thee.* The solo, the verse, and the chorus, in our church music, express all these turns in the sacred poetry, when they are properly applied. The responsory form of our chanting by alternate singing in the choir is agreeable to the heavenly worship of the seraphim, in the vision of the prophet Isaiah, where they are represented as crying one to another with alternate voices *, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts. The version of the Psalms into poetical metre leads to a sort of Psalmody so plainly measured, as to be easily comprehended and performed by the generality of the people in a congregation; and simple as this music may appear, the greatest masters have thought it worthy of their cultivation, and we have some divine pieces of harmony in this kind. The old hundredth Psalm, which is ascribed to Martin Luther, is deservedly admired; the 113th is excellent; so is the old 81st, the 148th, and many others, which are judiciously retained in our congregations.

* Alternis dicetis, amant alterna Camænæ. VIRG.

Such

Such is the state, and such the excellence of our music, in the Church of England; and long may the sound of our cathedrals and churches go up to heaven, and reach the ears of the Lord of Sabbaoth.

To what hath here been said on the nature, and use, and state of music, I wish it were in my power to add something effectual toward the reformation of some abuses; for such will find admission into all societies, through negligence in some, and want of judgment in others.

As God is the greatest and best of beings, and it is the highest honour of man in this life to serve him, every thing relating to his worship should be ordered with decency, propriety, reverence, and affection. *I will sing with the understanding*, saith the Apostle: so should we sing, and so should we perform, in all our approaches to the throne of Grace; our music should be the music of wise men and of Christians. No lame, or maimed, or defective sacrifice was permitted to be offered in the temple of God; who, being the first proprietor of all things, hath a claim to the best of every thing, and consequently to the best music, performed in the best manner we are able.

Church

Church music has a proper character of its own, which is more excellent than that of secular, or profane music, and should always be preserved. Without the restraints of discretion, wisdom, and authority, the art of man is apt to run out into excess and impropriety; and while it affects to be too fine, and too powerful, becomes ridiculous. What is it but vanity that betrays the poet into bombast, the orator into buffoonery, the composer of music into useless curiosity, the performer into ineffectual rapidity and flourish? Thus do men always fail of their end, when they think more about *themselves* than about their subject. Queen Elizabeth, therefore, took what care she could by her injunctions, that affectation, which spoils all other things, should not be permitted to spoil the music of the Church: and it hath been rightly observed, that the music from the Reformation to the Restoration was more plain and solemn in its style than that which succeeded; though it still preserved great excellence.

The performer on the organ, who, for the time he is playing by himself, hath the minds of the congregation under his hand, should take care not to mislead the ignorant into vain fancies, nor to offend the judicious with unreasonable

unseasonable levity. In the tone of the diapasons of the church organ, there is nothing noisy and military, nothing weak and effeminate, but a majestic sweetness, which is fittest to dispose the mind of the hearer to a devout and holy temper. If the diapasons could speak in articulate words, there is not a text in the Bible which they would not utter with dignity and reverence; and hence their music is of excellent use to prepare the people for the hearing of the Scripture. Many here present must have felt the effect of it: and I hope I shall give no offence if I add it as a suspicion, that they who do not feel the power of slow harmony upon the organ, have not the right sense of musical sounds. The organist should, therefore, by all means, cultivate that style of harmony which is proper to this noble capacity of his instrument.

The Psalmody of our country churches is universally complained of, as very much out of order, and wanting regulation in most parts of the kingdom. The authority of the minister is competent to direct such music as is proper, and to keep the people to the ancient forms. A company of persons, who appoint themselves under the name of *the singers*, assume

assume an exclusive right, which belongs not to them but to the congregation at large; and they often make a very indiscreet use of their liberty; neglecting the best old Psalmody, till the people forget it, and introducing new tunes, which the people cannot learn; some of them without science, without simplicity, without solemnity; causing the serious to frown, and the inconsiderate to laugh. I have frequently heard such wild airs as were not fit to be brought into the church; through the ignorance of the composers, who were not of skill to distinguish what kind of melody is proper for the church, and what for the theatre, and what for neither. If any Anthems are admitted during the time of divine service, country choristers should confine themselves to choral harmony, in which they may do very well; and our church abounds with full Anthems by the best masters*. No solos should ever be introduced

* We labour under one inconvenience in respect to our Psalmody, which might be removed. Our Psalm tunes have undergone so many experiments, that there is great diversity in copies and editions, some of them very false and bad; whence it happens too often, that the organist plays one way, while the congregation sings another, and

duced without an instrument to support them; and besides, these require a superior degree of expression to make them tolerable. The Psalmodists of country choirs may with care and practice sing well in time and tune; and in choral music, or music of several parts, the want of due expression is compensated by

a confusion arises which should always be avoided. I have known even the 100th Psalm tune, common as it is, materially affected by the blunders of incompetent editors. An eminent master (the late Dr. *Boyce*) furnished our cathedrals with a correct and valuable copy of the best Services and Anthems from the Reformation to the beginning of the present century. It is to be wished that all the Psalm-tunes of the first merit and authority were published in the like compleat form by as faithful an editor. An original edition by *Ravenscroft*, himself the greatset author of our ancient Psalmody, was published in four parts, but is rarely to be met with, and, in its present form, is not very intelligible to common singers. To render the old Psalm tunes more generally useful in congregations, a learned friend of mine hath published a very good collection of them in three parts very lately, under the title of, *Select Portions of the Psalms of Dævid, for the use of Parish Churches:* and though I am precluded from saying any thing in praise of this edition, I shall venture to recommend it as the most correct and convenient work of the kind. I am witness also, how rapidly it hath advanced the just performance of Psalmody in a parish of my own.

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the fullness of the harmony: but they can never attain to the *speaking* of music without being taught. There is an utterance in singing, as in preaching or praying, which must be learned from the judgment of those who excel in it. A man can no more sing a solo for the church without a musical education, than a clown can speak upon the stage for a learned audience in a theatre.

When we consider the performance of sacred music as a *duty*, much is to be learned from it. If music is a gift of God to us for our good, it ought to be used as such, for the improvement of the understanding, and the advancement of devotion. Services, Anthems, and Psalms should be understood as lessons of purity in life and manners. Rejoice in the Lord, *O ye righteous*, saith the Psalmist, for it becometh well *the just* to be thankful. What! shall we praise God with our lips, while we blaspheme him with our lives? *Praise*, saith the son of Sirach, *is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner, for it was not sent him of the Lord.* Praise to the Lord is proper to those only who derive blessings from the Lord; it is impertinent and false when it comes from those who are never the better for him. *O give thanks unto the Lord, for he*

is good, for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy: but let not them say so, who have given themselves up to a state of captivity under sin and folly. Some there are, who are very loud and forward in singing, while they are insensible of the greatness and the value of those subjects which our music celebrates: like the *sounding brass* of a trumpet, which makes a great noise, but feels nothing. Others there are, who are not chargeable with this error: loose, irreligious people, who have an absolute dislike and contempt for divine music: and they are right; for it would carry them out of their element. But God forbid that we should be where they are: no; let us keep our music, and amend our lives. It must be our own fault, if our music doth not contribute to our reformation, and we may have it to answer for in common with the other means of improvement which we have abused. All our church music tends to keep up our acquaintance with the Psalms, those divine compositions, of which none can feel the sense, as music makes them feel it, without being edified. The sacred harp of David will still have the effect it once had upon Saul; it will quiet the disorders

disorders of the mind, and drive away the enemies of our peace.

Another excellent use of music, is for the increase of charity; and this in more senses than one. When Christians unite their voices in the praises of God, their hearts become more united to one another. Harmony and Charity never do better than when they meet together; they are of the same heavenly original; they illustrate and promote each other. For as different voices join together in the same harmony, and are all necessary to render it complete; so are all Christians necessary to one another. The high and the low all meet together in the church of Christ, and form one body. As those who perform their different parts in a piece of music, do all conspire to the same effect; so are we all members one of another; and as such, are to be unanimous in the performance of our several duties to the praise and glory of God. And as a greater heat arises from a collection of a greater number of rays from the sun, so more Christians, united in charity and harmony, are happier than fewer. The most critical judges of music must deny their own feelings, if they do not allow that the effect of music is wonderfully increased by the multiplication

of voices. Indeed the principle is attested and confirmed by the grand performances of the present age, so greatly and skilfully conducted of late years to the astonishment of the hearers. Magnitude of sound will strike the mind as well as sweetness of harmony; and this is one reason why we are all so affected with the sound of thunder, to which the sound of a great multitude may well be compared. Thus it comes to pass in the union of Christians: the joy and peace of every individual increases in proportion as charity is diffused and multiplied in the church.

But there is another sense in which charity is promoted by music. This happens on those occasions, when music is promoted with a charitable intention. Very considerable sums are raised from the contributions of those who come to be treated with sacred harmony. The poor are fed, the sick are healed, and many good works are carried forward. Blessed be the art, which from the hands and hearts of the wealthy and the honourable, can draw relief for the poor and needy! The widows and orphans of the poor clergy of this church were the first objects relieved through the medium of church music: and

and let us hope they will rather be gainers than losers by all improvements in this way: for they who are related to the church have, undoubtedly, a priority of claim upon the music of the church.

I am now, lastly, to remind both my hearers and myself, that all our observations upon this subject will be to no purpose, unless from the use of divine music, and its effect upon us, we learn to aspire to the felicity of heaven, of which it gives us a foretaste. While we are in this lower state, there is no vehicle like sound for lifting the soul upwards toward the eternal source of glory and harmony. We may conceive of the spirit of man as riding on the wings of Psalmody to the celestial regions, whereto its own powers could never transport it. A great admirer and practitioner of sacred music, who was also a man of great piety and devotion, was present at a grand church performance, with which he felt his mind so wrapt and elevated, that in describing the sensation afterwards, he made use of this emphatical expression—*I thought I should have gone out of the body* *. O what a place would this world be, were it our only employment thus to be rising upwards towards heaven, to

* The late Rev. Sir John Dolben.

visit God with our hearts and affections, adoring his greatness, and delighted with his goodness! but this we can attain to only by uncertain intervals: the corruptible body will soon recall the soul from its heavenly flights. How high soever it may mount, on certain occasions, it must descend again to the wants and weaknesses and sorrows of mortality; as the lark, from its loftiest song in the air, drops to its lowly residence upon the ground. However, what we do enjoy must make us wish for more. What then have we to do, but to fit ourselves for that society, which praise God without interruption in his own glorious presence, and rest not day or night?

When that heavenly scenery is described to us in the Revelation—"I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth! let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him!" Who can read these words without a desire to add his own voice to that multitude, and to sing as a member of that kingdom, in which the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth! How must the soul be filled with that immense chorus of men and angels, to which the loudest

and

and mightiest thunder shall add dignity without terror, and be reduced to the temper of an accompaniment!

God of his infinite mercy give us grace so to pray, and so to sing, and so to live, in this short time of our probation, that we may be admitted into the celestial choir, where with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, and with sounds as yet unheard and unconceived, we may laud and magnify the adorable name of God; ascribing to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, into whose name and worship we were baptized upon earth, all honour, glory, power, might, majesty and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

FEAR GOD. 1 PETER II. 17.

MAN is led to the fear of God by a wise consideration of his power in the creation and preservation of the world, and the justice with which he governs it now, and will judge it hereafter.

By this fear man is distinguished from the beasts of the field; which are fearfully and wonderfully made, but have no apprehension of the power which formed them: they are fed by the hand of God, but are insensible of his bounty: they are governed by him, and observe his laws, but know not their lawgiver. But the view of man extends to that invisible power which made and sustains the world: he sees that hand which *filleth all things living with plenteousness;* and expects retribution from

from that just Judge, who knows the secrets of all hearts, and is no respecter of persons.

The brute creation is subject to the dominion of men; but man himself, being the subject of God, is never to proceed in any matter, as if God had no concern with it. When we think and live by this rule, we are *men*, properly so called; because we are under the influence of a *fear* unknown to irrational creatures; and are exalted to our proper dignity, as subjects of the kingdom of God.

Fear is a servile passion, when it has an unworthy object; but it becomes honourable when God is the object of it, and is the test of the human character. When fear is understood in a more general sense, and qualified with prudence, it is the passion which distinguishes men from brutes, and wise men from fools. The ignorant fear nothing, because they know nothing; and some people are mistaking and offending all their lives, because they never know when to fear, nor what to be afraid of: so that the want of fear argues a want of wit in common life, as it undoubtedly argues a want of grace in religion.

Nothing but the fear of God can render a man fit to live in the world as a member of society. No penalties, which human authority

rity can inflict, lay any obligation upon the conscience; but he that fears God will consider himself as the servant and subject of God, and consequently he will be true and just, independent of all temporal considerations.

To *believe* in God, and to *fear* him, ought to be the same thing with all mankind: but experience shews us, that many, who would be ashamed to deny God openly, do not live as if they feared him. Let me, therefore, point out to you some of those considerations which produce the fear of God in the heart of man.

The first of these is the consideration of his power, as it is manifested to us in the natural world. Who can observe the glorious lights of heaven in their wonderful order; the changes of the seasons, the operations of the elements, the structure of man, without being filled with a sense of the divine power? *They shall fear thee*, saith the Psalmist, *as long as the sun and moon endureth.* The lights of heaven must be blotted out of it, before we can resist the necessary inference, that the Maker of them is the first and greatest object of our fear and reverence.

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We go forward with this argument, and consider God as the governor of the world; directing the elements for our good, or interrupting the course of them for our punishment. What force of language can imprint such an awe upon the mind, as a sight of that solemn and majestic appearance of the sky, which is preparatory to a storm of thunder? When the clouds, as if they were summoned by a divine command, are gathered together from different quarters of the heaven; when the air is dark above, and the earth below is in silent expectation of the voice that is to follow, and fearful of that fire, which gives us an assurance and foretaste of what shall happen at the destruction of the world. Well might it be said by *Elihu*, in the book of *Job—At this my heart trembleth, and is moved out of its place.* The man who feels nothing upon such an occasion, has no reason to value himself upon his courage: such courage is no honour to any man: it is not fortitude, but stupidity. In different minds the effect will be different: in some, the terrors of guilt will be awakened; in others, a pious fear, and a submissive veneration, by which they are brought nearer to God, and become better acquainted with their own sins and infirmities.

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The providence of God in the government of states, and the changes of empire, is another consideration which will instruct us farther in the fear of him, by shewing us how we are subject to his power, and dependent upon his will.

The mighty monarchy of Babylon was raised up for a scourge to other nations: it was an axe in the hand of Providence, and hewed down other powers, to exalt itself; while the invisible hand, which directed it, was turning it to other purposes. It was made instrumental in punishing the Jews for their idolatry; detaining them under a long and miserable captivity, till they were cured of their inclination to idols: and when this end was answered, and the Jews were to be replaced in their own land, the power of this great kingdom departed from it in one night. As soon as the sentence was passed, it was executed on the profane *Belshazzar;* and the particulars of this catastrophe are preserved by a celebrated heathen historian. Cyrus, to whom the kingdom was transferred, used his authority soon afterwards for the rebuilding of the temple of Jerusalem, and the restoration of the Jewish œconomy.

When

When God was about to send the Christian religion into the world, which was to be spread into every part of it, the Roman empire increased to its utmost grandeur, and the form of it was changed from republican to monarchical, amongst a people, who by education, natural temper and principle, were the most averse to monarchy of any upon earth. The country of Judea, the stage on which the gospel was to make its first appearance, was become a Roman province, governed by Roman magistrates, and subject to Roman laws and customs: whence it came to pass, that our Saviour, Jesus Christ, suffered death upon a cross, after the Roman manner; his preachers were sent about the world, over which the Roman jurisdiction was extended; and the gospel at length became the established religion of the empire, by virtue of the imperial edicts, in opposition to all the power and interest of paganism. When these things were accomplished, and the designs of Providence were answered, this mighty empire was broken into smaller independent kingdoms, and the name of it is now nearly lost in the world.

The Roman power answered another remarkable purpose in the hand of God, for the punishment of the Jews under their last and

great apostasy. They betrayed and crucified their Saviour, *lest the Romans should come and take away their place and nation;* maliciously exclaiming, that they had *no king but Cæsar:* therefore, these very Romans were the people appointed of God to drive them out of their land; the power of Cæsar, to whom they had given the preference, was turned against them; and they who had sold their Saviour were, themselves, sold into captivity and bondage; thirty of them, as history saith, for one piece of silver.

Their rejection of the gospel, and the consequent judgment of God upon them, are thus represented in one of the parables of Christ—*They took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them: but when the king heard thereof he was wroth; and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city.* When the Jews had filled up the measure of their sins, the Roman armies were sent out by the Divine direction, to inflict the vengeance due to them. Their city was burned, their temple levelled with the ground: their land is now possessed by aliens and infidels; themselves are wandering about the world, without any home, and their *backs are bowed down* under the burthens they carry upon

upon them; they are mixed with all nations, but incorporated with none; they sojourn with all people, yet still differ from all, in their customs, and even in their looks; they are marked out, like Cain, as vagabonds and murderers, and are miraculously preserved for a lesson to all that behold them: so that a man can hardly look upon a Jew without exclaiming—*Thou persuadest me to be a Christian. Slay them not,* said the prophet, *lest my people forget it, but scatter them abroad:* for thence it will be understood in all succeeding ages, that God is terrible in his judgments; that none can forsake him, without being lost to themselves; and that obedience to his law can alone secure his protection to any other nation.

The Jews are held forth as the most striking examples of national sin, and national punishment; but they are not singular: other nations have had their share, when their pride and wickedness have provoked the divine displeasure: and some would grow wise, in time, from the example of others, unless it were found to be true, by fatal experience, that men become infatuated in their understandings, when they are devoted to destruction.

If the history of this kingdom were to be written, with all the truth and impartiality of inspiration, and effects compared justly with their causes; we should see how God, at sundry times, and in divers manners, hath interposed to visit us; sometimes raising us to honour, in the sight of those that are round about us, and indulging us with the blessings of peace and plenty; at other times giving us up to be devoured among ourselves, when a spirit of faction and disobedience has been let loose, to set us at variance, and make us a scourge to one another. When a sense of past evils shall have lost its effect upon us, then the same turbulent spirit will again prevail, to undermine our greatness, and render us weak and contemptible in the sight of the nations that are round about us.

Upon the whole, so manifest is the power of God in the creation and direction of the natural world; so remarkable the interposition of his providence in the revolutions of kingdoms; that he who cannot thence infer the necessity of fearing him, and the wisdom of being subject to him, has neither the faith of a Christian, nor the understanding of a man. And now, if to the foregoing considerations we add this, the last and greatest of all; that

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the same God who visits us here in this life, is to judge us in another; all other fear will resolve itself into the fear of him; according to that precept of our blessed Saviour, *I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: fear him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him.* But then you are to understand with all this, that our religion is not intended to make life melancholy and miserable, but rather to make us happier by making us wiser, and to keep us in safety by bringing us nearer unto God. It teaches the necessity of a reasonable fear; the wisdom of a voluntary subjection; a fear which brings security, and a subjection which leads to liberty.

If, after what I have said, there should be any here present, who have not the fear of God, and will not be persuaded to it; I must warn them of one thing, which perhaps they have not considered. I give them to know, then, that no man born into this world can live *without fear.* If he does not fear God, he shall not escape fearless, as he thinks; for he shall certainly fear something else. The fear of God would do him good, and make him happy: but if he does not fear God, he shall fall into some other fear, which will do

him no good at all, but haunt him like an evil spirit, to make his enjoyments worthless, and his life miserable.

You are to observe, then, that he who does not fear God, shall fear *death*. When God is banished from the mind, the hope of immortality goes with him, and the fear of death prevails: and death being an enemy whom no man can cheat, or conquer, or avoid; the mind that is apprehensive of him falls under a sort of bondage, for which the whole world has no remedy.

When a man does not fear God, he is possessed with a servile fear of the world; he becomes the slave of fashion, in his mind, his body, and his morals: he dreads nothing so much as to be thought little and insignificant, by those who give laws to the fashionable part of society. He looks up to the opinion of the world with all that anxious reverence with which a Christian looks to the word of God. How many do we meet with, who are miserable, unless they are seen where the world is, and go where the world goes! How many renounce their judgment, or conceal it, and that with respect to the greatest subjects, if it contradicts the current of the day!

You

You are to consider farther, that he who does not fear God shall fear *poverty*. The fear of God gives a man the hope of an inheritance in another world; therefore he is easy if he has but little property in this. But where this world is all a man hath, and all he is to expect, he will fly from poverty with the loss of his conscience, and at the hazard of his soul, if he is in the higher class of life: if he is a profligate of the lowest order, he will expose himself daily to the iron hand of justice, for the sake of some stolen possession, and all his enjoyments are embittered with the terrors of the halter and the gibbet.

All cases are not equally bad: yet I may venture to pronounce, that although many do not entirely forget God, yet, in proportion as the fear of God is wanting in the heart, in that same proportion will these other fears enter in and dwell there: and a thoughtful and sensible person can no more enjoy himself in such company, than if he were daily beset with ruffians and murderers. All the base passions which murder a man's soul, murder his peace at the same time: and this is what he gets by a dislike to the fear of God. Therefore, as it is the worst of folly to live without the fear of God, it must be the *begin-*

ning of wisdom to have it, and be directed by it. But folly in this world leads to misery in another; which is the most dreadful consideration of all. Who can express or conceive the amazement of those, who have lived here without the fear of God, when they shall see the day of vengeance approaching, and all the terrors of the last judgment gathering round about them! Then shall that fear of God come upon them, which now for a while they can put away: and the hearts of those, who now seem to care for nothing, shall sink and melt away within them. What would they then give, if they had but been wise enough to attend to instruction while the day of grace lasted? What will then become of their proud speeches, and their looks of defiance? when they shall remember their folly in the bitterness of their souls, and be afraid to lift up their heads towards heaven, where their Judge is now revealed to every eye, no longer to be despised and insulted, but attended with millions of the heavenly host; seated on a throne, rendered majestic and terrible, with dark clouds and flames of fire.

For the present hour, we talk of these things, as distant from us; yet when they shall be displayed before our sight, the interval

terval between this time and that will seem but as a moment. What are we then to do, but to *set the Lord alway before us;* who, if he is our *fear* now, he will be our *defence* then: and in the mean time, we shall find our fears of all other things lessening every day, and our hopes increasing; till an acquaintance with God shall give us a foretaste of the peace and liberty of that glorious kingdom, in which we shall *serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness.*

SERMON VII.

HONOUR THE KING. 1 PETER II. 17.

THE precept in the text, which at this time deserves the serious consideration of all Christian people in this kingdom, is founded on that common doctrine of the Scripture, that kings and rulers have their authority from God, and that upon this account they are to receive honour from men.

To prevent all mistakes, give me leave to observe, in the first place, that it can never hurt kings and rulers to tell them so. Are the clergy the worse men, when they consider themselves as the servants of God? May they do as they please, because they are the ministers and stewards of a master, who is no respecter

respecter of persons, and from whom, if they fail, they will receive the greater condemnation? That would be a strange inference: and the same observation is applicable to civil governors. All power being originally inherent in God as his own property, power is a talent committed by him to man: and as the abuse of this is more extensive in its ill effects than the abuse of any private endowment, it must be strictly accounted for; therefore this doctrine can do no harm: there is no flattery in it; it is a fearful consideration.

With respect to ourselves, the consequence is plain; that if kings rule by an authority from God, it must be our duty to give them honour: in treating of which, I shall endeavour to convince you, that it is also our *wisdom*, and our *interest*, as a people.

Our duty is evident from the Scripture; which declares, that government is the ordinance of God; that the ruler is the minister of God; that the sword in his hand, is a sword of divine justice; and that the wrath, executed by it, is the wrath of God against those who transgress *his* laws. Government must therefore be supported, that the *laws of God* may be *executed:* and this is one reason why rebellion

bellion against government is an offence against God himself, because its tendency is to set us loose from the observation of his laws. That charge of Jehosaphat to the Judges of Israel, is upon all others in the like authority; *take heed what ye do, for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in judgment.* And the same charge will apply itself to the people: "take heed what ye do, for your obedience is not to man, but to the Lord."

The primitive Christians placed civil obedience among the first articles of social duty; and we cannot refuse to Christian princes that honour which they allowed to heathen emperors. *I exhort,* said the apostle, *that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and a peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.* When the enemies of the Christians had no evil thing to say, they endeavoured to make them odious to the state, as people of suspicious politics, the friends of another king, whose interests were not consistent with those of the empire. But this scandal was confuted by that amiable submission and quietness which they never failed to observe

observe towards all that were in authority over them.

Our duty, then, is clear from such precepts as cannot be evaded, and such examples as are taken from the purest times of the gospel, when obedience to heathen persecutors was a trial far more severe to flesh and blood, than the practice of common loyalty to the friends and protectors of Christianity.

The *wisdom* of adhering to this duty, is the next thing to be considered. And surely it must be the wisdom of men enlightened by the word of God, and blessed with great improvements of science, to proceed on true principles; to walk in that light which they have, and not to emulate the darkness of heathens, or the confusion and rapine of barbarians. The Scripture teaches us, that *there is no power but of God;* that, as he is the maker of the world, all the property of the world is originally vested in him; that kings hold of him; and the people of their kings: and our laws recognize this doctrine, by making all property revert to the crown, upon any act of treason or rebellion. Some embrace another opinion, that there is *no power but of the people;* which position being contrary to that of the

the scripture, they cannot both be true. The question about power may easily be solved, if we do but distinguish rightly between *physical* or *natural* power, and power of *authority*. It can never be denied, that an armed multitude is superior in physical power to any defenceless man, with all his honours and titles about him; as smoke and ashes, shot upwards from the bowels of the earth, can put out the light of the sun: but in this there is no power of authority; and it may be turned against all the law, and all the reason in the world. A gang of robbers have power over the helpless traveller in the forest, and he is obliged to submit to it at the peril of his life: but still there is no authority; nothing but brutal force; and it matters not how *large* we suppose the gang to be; for its properties are no more changed by its magnitude, than the properties of a circle, which are always the same. Their power is absolute force; and the authority by which they exercise it, is from themselves, against all the *settlements* of *law*, and all the *rights* of *possession*. Allow but the force of those two commandments, Thou shalt *do no murder*, Thou shalt *not steal*, and then all this sort of power vanishes.

Such,

Such, however, is the power of the people; against which, therefore, every government is armed and defended; and without such a defence, there could be neither property nor security in the world; nothing but violence and rapine, which are sure to prevail, as soon as the people, under some wolvish unprincipled leaders of sedition, attempt to take power into their own hands. All liberty then takes its flight; the liberty of acting, of speaking, and perhaps of breathing; unless the breath be applied to blow the flames of sedition.

My brethren, let me speak freely to you upon this subject: power is a weapon of so sharp an edge, that mistakes about the nature and exercise of it are perilous indeed, and the bad consequences inexpressible: therefore, as we value our own security, let us always distinguish between *power* and *authority*. The storm hath power to blow; the waves of the sea have power to rage; the lightning hath power to strike; the fire hath power to consume; but all this power tends only to *destruction*: the power which God giveth is *for edification, and not for destruction*. It is to build up society and preserve it, not to destroy it. He hath appointed the sun to *rule* over the

the day, the moon and the stars to *govern* the night: all the nations of the earth enjoy light, and peace, and happiness under their *dominion*, and their authority is confined by a law which cannot be broken. But if we should become so insensible of this blessing, as to argue for a lawless power in the elements, and they were to be let loose upon us in consequence of our mistake; we should then discover, that it is the wisdom as well as the happiness of man, to submit to the ordinance of God. They are *his* laws which are executed in a state; and they can be executed by no authority but *his own:* if by an authority from the people, that would exalt the people into the place of God. Every state must have power of life and death: but no individual hath any such power over himself; and consequently, he cannot give what he hath not: such a power can be communicated only by that God, in whose hand are the lives of all mankind; to whom alone belongs that sword of justice, which is borne by the magistrate: who being the *giver*, is also the *Lord of Life;* and to suppose it otherwise, is to derive power by ascent instead of descent; which is contrary to the order of nature in all other cases whatsoever. Christians,

tians, who, according to the doctrine of their religion, derive all power from *above*, from whence *every good and perfect gift cometh*, go as high as they can, up to God himself: they who derive it from beneath, must go as low as they can, even down to the father of all that tumultuous rage and disorder, which distinguishes the power of the people. When this power is supposed to include authority, it is so contrary to fact, to reason, and to revelation, that it is seldom taken up, but by those, who wish to raise a storm against the state, and encourage the waves to beat, because they have hopes of plunder from the wreck. Such a power was, indeed, admitted and highly esteemed by those fanciful Greeks and Romans of later times, who, having departed from their ancient principles, were torn to pieces with factions, and amused themselves with a vain search after that philosopher's stone in politics, a constitution where all might govern, and none be governed; till their balancings and fluctuations produced an arbitrary government, and brought them all under the yoke of military power; the natural consequence of such experiments. When a nation is grown restless with dreams of despotism, jealous of all authority, and agitated

tated with contentions for power, on the ground of *natural right* against *positive law;* then we may know that the desolation thereof is nigh; that it must either fall under the lawless power of some intestine faction, or be reduced to the mortification of looking on, while its lands are divided and parcelled out by a foreign force; which hath happened lately in a country of Europe, where liberty was professed, whilst the worst sort of tyranny was practised.

But it is also our *interest*, as well as our duty and wisdom, to honour the king, and support that power by which we are protected. Government was not ordained to enslave the world, but to preserve the peace of society, to defend the innocent from the violent and injurious, to distinguish and secure property, and to prevent the people from falling a prey to one another, as they never fail to do in times of rebellion. When the restraint of government hinders the will of one man from being a law to another, by maintaining a common rule of action for all, it is the greatest blessing upon earth. There are in every nation turbulent spirits, who would permit no law to prevail but their own will; and, if there were nothing to hinder them,

them, would set the world on fire to make themselves considerable. *Tribute* is, therefore, due from every people, in return for the protection they receive: and if the government of the most absolute tyrant is better than the force of a lawless multitude; that is, if one bad man without law is a less evil than an hundred thousand, the purchase (dear as it may be) is certainly worth the price to those who are blessed with a regular establishment.

Our common interest will oblige us to consider, that the strength of every government against its foreign enemies depends on the affection of its own natural subjects; so that they are its worst enemies, who endeavour to lessen that affection; for when a nation is out of humour with its governors, and careless of its establishment, it is of course weak and defenceless. Great things may be done, when the people are united with one heart and mind under the person of their prince. How small and contemptible an insect is the bee? yet, when the whole swarm is assembled, and kept together by an attachment to their leader, they are invincible; neither man nor beast can stand against them. Every loyal nation hath the

same advantage: but then we are to remember, that the union, in which their strength consists, is the gift of God; who maketh men to be of one mind for their common preservation.

Under this head of interest, our *honour* is concerned: for the honour of the people is involved in that of their king. We must judge of states as we do of families. Does it not add to the reputation of any family, when there is a good understanding among the members of it; especially if the father of it is well esteemed, and treated with veneration by those who are under him, his children and his servants? But it is a sure sign, that the family is either very wicked, or very vulgar, when a proper deference is wanting from the children to the parents: the disgrace of their ill behaviour returns with double weight upon themselves; according to that admonition of the son of Sirach, *Glory not in the dishonour of thy father; for thy father's dishonour is no glory unto thee: for the glory of a man is from the honour of his father.* Whatever accusation there may be ground for, it is weak and cruel in a son to take it up: he should leave that to the worst enemies of the family, whose malice is waiting for

for the ruin of them all. But if the father is virtuous and honourable, then the son is a wretch, who can delight himself with the dishonour of such a parent. All this is applicable to those subjects, wheresoever they are to be found, who search for accusations, who feed upon grievances, who shout for joy on any disadvantage to their native country, and publish its distress to all the world, making ten times more of it than is true. If duty could not restrain such, policy and common sense should be sufficient to guard them from so unnatural and ridiculous a crime.

To conclude; we live in a country, where the fear of God, and the honour of the king, are inculcated by the laws of the state, and all the forms and doctrines of the church. Let us be thankful to God that they are still preserved to us; and that our profession is such, as duty, wisdom, interest, and honour, will never fail to recommend. There is nothing to seduce us from the practice of this profession, but false ideas of liberty, with which unthinking minds are easily captivated: and complaints of slavery and grievances, with which weak and unbridled tempers are easily terrified. Against the ill effects of these, give me leave to observe, not as a politician

(for I do not aspire to that character) but as a minister of Jesus Christ; that there is no true liberty but in the service of God; and that the greatest of all grievances is sin, as fatal to societies as to individuals. The only free men, properly so called, are they whom the Son of God hath made free from the bondage of sin: the slavery is all on the other side; with those who are subject to their own turbulent lusts and passions, by which they are as effectually enslaved as the wretch who is chained down to drudge at the oar, all the days of his life: *his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness.* Pride, vanity, avarice, envy, hatred, ambition, extravagance, and impatience; these are the tyrants of the children of disobedience, who, while they are under the dominion of such masters, are generally the most forward to hold out the temptation of liberty, and promise it to all their followers; but the beggar may as well promise crowns and scepters. Of such men St. Peter gives us this character, that they *speak evil of dignities;* and while they *promise liberty* are themselves the *servants of corruption.* Tied and bound with the chain of their vices, and probably of their *debts,* they

they commence arbiters of freedom; and would have us believe, what great quietness we should enjoy, and what very worthy deeds would be done by their providence.

It is a mistake of the worst tempers only, to suppose that liberty consists in contradiction; for if that were true, then the more unreasonable the contradiction, the greater the liberty. Every society is a body, the members of which being appointed to different offices, should all conspire to the same end for the good of the whole. Hath the tongue no liberty, but in uttering imprecations, and calling down vengeance upon its owner? Have the hands no liberty, but when they are lifted up against the head, or striking at the heart? It is the honour of the feet, that they can support the head, by which they are animated and directed: it is the honour of the hands, that they can defend the vital parts, and repel the adversaries of the body: this is their proper employment, and when the order of nature is observed, the whole system will be in safety, which is all the liberty good men will ever expect in a world so full of mischief and danger.

As to grievances, it must be owned we have our share; and no government in the

world is without them; but it is the unhappiness of this nation, to be more disturbed with imaginary than with real evils. The sick man may suffer much from his distemper; but he often suffers much more from his dreams, and throws himself into certain destruction, while he is flying from the terrors of a vision. It is no such easy matter for people in a lower sphere, especially in this age of scandal and defamation, to know when and how their superiors are in fault. The inhabitant of the valley blames the dimness of the air, and sees a mist spread over the hills and higher grounds; which to those in a better situation, appears to rise out of his own soil, and to settle upon the place of his own habitation. But then, have governors no faults, and are we to see nothing amiss in them? undoubtedly they have their faults, if they are mortal men, together with many difficulties, misfortunes, and mortifications from their office; under all which, it is our duty to pray for them, and not to revile them; to pray that God will give them grace to amend their faults, and assist them by his good providence, in the critical affairs of their country; approving ourselves as true Christians, servants of God, and friends of mankind.

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Let not then any heathen principles, any visionary notions of liberty, interpose to debauch our minds with disaffection, and thereby give occasion to foreign enemies, whose envy will always be active, and is even now awake, to foment our divisions, and to triumph in all the unhappy effects of them *. Not many years are passed since we might justly be accounted the first people in the world. Nothing can support us in that high rank, but loyalty and unanimity; without which, a kingdom that hath attained its utmost greatness, must soon fall with its own weight.

May therefore the King immortal and invisible, in whose hand are all the nations of the earth; who, according to his good pleasure, sendeth counsel in peace and success in war, give us all grace, in our several stations, to correct what is amiss, to hold fast what is good, to restore what is lost, to preserve what is ready to perish, and to see the things that belong to our peace, before they are hid from our eyes! Amen.

* Those enemies have now disarmed themselves, by falling into the doctrine of licentiousness, against which this discourse was directed.

SERMON VIII.

TO THE ONE WE ARE THE SAVOUR OF DEATH UNTO DEATH; AND TO THE OTHER THE SAVOUR OF LIFE UNTO LIFE: AND WHO IS SUFFICIENT FOR THESE THINGS? 2 COR. II. 16.

SO strangely has the world been divided in its opinion concerning the Gospel, that the ministers of Jesus Christ, whose business it is to preach it, have always found themselves in a difficult situation; for which no man can be sufficient without the gifts of fortitude, and prudence, and patience, from the Spirit of God, to support and assist him in his office. Christianity always had, and always will have its adversaries: it corrects the false opinions, and controuls the licentious morals of unconverted nature; therefore nature rises

up

up against it; and as nature is the same in all ages and in all parts of the world, time and place make but little difference in this respect. The difficulty was certainly greater to the Apostles than it is to us. The heathen religion was then in possession of the world; and all its abominable practices had the sanction of custom and establishment; so that the opposition then carried on against the gospel was more active and virulent, as well as more powerful, than it is now. But error and vice are still the adversaries of true religion as they were then; and therefore the difficulty must remain to all the successors of the Apostles, so long as error and vice shall have any power and interest upon earth. God who gave to his ministers the knowledge of the truth, and all good men who love the truth, will be ready to encourage them for their work's sake; but evil will be as near at hand to discourage and resist them. The Apostle, having this case under his consideration, is shocked with the difficulty, and cries out, *who is sufficient for these things?* Who can endure to stand in this fearful and troublesome situation, with the sun shining on one side of him, and a cold tempestuous wind beating against him on the other? What patience can

can hold out against, what constitution can long survive, such a trial? Yet such must be the trial, in some degree, of every true preacher of God's word; and as it has been my lot to preach amongst you, I hope with some profit, I am sure with much sincerity, it will be for our common advantage to consider the difficulties to which I am exposed in common with every other minister of a parish; that having considered them, you may be ready (as I have reason to think you will be) to do all in your power to lessen them. The better I shall succeed in my duty, the greater will be your advantage; and that as well in this world as in the next.

However well disposed and tractable the people of a parish may be, all will not be alike. Some will respect their minister for God's sake, for the church's sake, and for his work's sake: they will attend with pleasure to his doctrine, and his advice will sink into their ears. He found them good, and his instructions will make them better: they will profit by his admonitions, and even bear his reproofs, if such should be necessary, without being offended. But it will not be so with all: others there are who will judge differently; some from an untractableness of natural

ral temper; some from worldly interest: some from an unhappy turn in their education, or from a total neglect of it, under careless and ungodly parents; more from bad customs, and long established habits of vice or self-indulgence. Hence it will always happen, that if a minister in his preaching bears hard upon any particular sin, as the course of his duty may require, and describes the folly, misery and shame of it; every sin will find a friend in some corner of the church who will take its part, and be offended with the preacher. If he speaks against drunkenness, "there," says the drinker, "he meant to reflect upon *me*:" that stroke upon covetousness, was intended for me, says another: in that remark upon the pernicious consequences of fornication, he meant to expose me, says another. Thus they bring themselves to a persuasion, that their minister is their enemy, and means to be severe upon them; for no other reason, but because they cannot help being severe upon themselves. Hear how the Apostle states this difficulty in a few words: *am I therefore*, says he, *become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?* Suppose we see a man straying out of the road, while he is going on business of the last importance, and has

no

no time to lose; and we call out to him to tell him he is wrong, and use all our endeavours to put him in the right way; ought that man to take us for his enemies? We should think him a strange man if he did. Is the shepherd an enemy to the straying sheep, when he would bring it back from the error of its ways in safety to the fold? But suppose that which *should be a* sheep, is a wolf, or a swine: such, indeed, have an interest against being brought back; and, instead of respecting their guide as a friend, will turn again and rent him. Some such there will be found in all places. Every minister must expect to have some amongst his flock, who are more nearly allied to the forest than the fold; who never intend to reform themselves, and do not even wish to be better than they are: even as the swine gives itself no trouble to acquire the character of the sheep. What will such do? What can they do, but endeavour, out of favour to themselves, to lessen the influence of their minister? There are several ways of doing this: of which the most common and obvious is to impute all his zeal to an evil motive; to pride, hypocrisy, or ill nature; to any thing rather than to sincerity and charity.

charity. Another way is to take advantage of some accident or appearance, and raise reports to his disadvantage. There never did, nor ever will live that man upon the earth, whose life could be secure from misrepresentation; and truth misrepresented answers all the purposes of defamation better than a lie, because there is some apparent foundation of reason and fact to build upon. Another artifice is that of ridicule. There is in most men, through the depravity of their nature, almost as great a propensity to laugh, as there is in monkies to chatter; and therefore they are very easily provoked to it. Children laugh at that which is nothing; and many with older heads upon their shoulders laugh at that which is next to nothing: some laugh when they ought to pray; and others when they ought to cry. I could tell you of a Wit, (now gone to answer for his folly) who even ridiculed the providence of God*, and the doctrine of future rewards and punishments in another life: Yet this is the engine which many people employ, to lessen the efficacy of the gospel, and the influence

* VOLTAIRE, in his *Candide*, which is a satire upon the belief both of a particular and general Providence.

of

of those that preach it. Not only the ministers of God, but even God himself is made an object of ridicule!

Thus you see how every preacher is liable, from the nature of his office, to suffer from the tongue of slander. They who hate the truth, must never be expected to love those that publish it; and of those whom they do not love, they will be tempted to speak evil. Hence you will understand the propriety of that declaration of our blessed Lord, "*woe be unto you when all men speak well of you:*" for the world at large never will speak well, but of those who make all things easy, and give them no disturbance: false prophets who *speak smooth things*, and care for nothing but themselves, will be well spoken of.

It is another misfortune upon the minister of a parish, that with frequent use his voice and manner become familiar, and consequently lose something of their force and influence upon the audience. When he comes first to a place, he is gladly received and eagerly attended to; just as any other thing would be that is *new*. But when curiosity abates, as it always must do with familiarity and repetition, such as have no deeper root than this to their attachment, must grow

indifferent, and will fall away, perhaps, into total inattention. The public is so fond of novelty, and more in this than any nation of Europe, that they are apt to over-rate what is new, and having begun with inexperience and indiscretion, they end with disappointment. Imagination, that deceitful faculty, is always at work to cheat men with vain expectations: they look for more than they can find, and thence suspect, at last, that they have found nothing. They expect a preacher to be all perfection, and exempt from the errors of mortality; but preachers are exposed to the same cross accidents with other men, from the vicissitudes and trials of human life, and the humours of other people, over which they have no power. They have their infirmities and their mistakes; they are exposed from without to the contempt of real enemies, and from within to the neglect and treachery of pretended friends; the world, from abroad, may frown upon the sincerity of their labours; and at home, their foes may be those of their own houshold. In all things of this kind, they are not only on a level with other men, but are in farther danger of being reduced below it from envy to their office, and jealousy against their authority: *These things*, saith

saith St. Paul, *I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that ye might learn in us, not to think of men above that which is written—for I think that God hath set forth us the Apostles last, as it were appointed unto death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men**. Even Christ himself, whose time was all spent in doing good, and shewing forth many mighty works, all of a saving and merciful turn, was railed at and despised, as one that *had a devil and was mad.* But who were they that spoke evil of him? conceited, blind guides, who had made God's word of no effect; covetous and adulterous pharisees; wordly-minded priests; unbelieving sadducees: hypocrites, politicians and profligates. In like manner, if there are any in a place who shew less regard than the rest to their clergyman; look at such persons, and examine their lives and manners; see whether they are kind and merciful to their poor neighbours? whether they make a conscience of frequenting the worship of God in the church? whether they are sober and temperate, abstaining from all indecency and excess? It

* 1 Cor. iv. 9.

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is a common observation, that some tongues can be guilty of little slander; because the reports of men and their reflections will have weight according to the value of their private characters. What does it signify how many ill words a man vomits out against his minister, who, perhaps, is seen in the street soon after, vomiting up his drink? What does it signify whether *he* honours a priest or not, who blasphemes the holy name of God in his common discourse, and is a disgrace to his profession, and a nuisance to the public? However, as there is no man who means to court another's ill-will, and who would not rather be glad to have his esteem; the disesteem which falls upon clergymen from their office, though it be only from the worst, and is totally owing to the parties themselves, is yet a loss and a trial: for the worst man has a soul, which might be saved; and a minister is bound to promote the salvation of it by forbearance, and tenderness, and kind advice, so long as there is any hope remaining.

Now I have represented to you some of the general difficulties and discouragements which must, in all places, attend a sincere clergyman; I shall venture to go a step farther, and set

before you some of the disadvantages peculiar to myself in this place: and I trust you will hear me patiently, and without offence.

My brethren, I am thankful that I came amongst you, and hope I shall never have any reason to repent of my choice; for hither did I come by choice, and not by necessity. The world was before me, and any other place might have suited with a busy life, such as mine has always been. But when I settled here, the parish had been long without a resident minister, and at times had been served very irregularly, and was consequently out of order: yet I think, upon the whole, not so much as would have happened in some other places under the like circumstances: and I have imputed much of the good that was retained amongst you, to the seed sown, and the labour bestowed by a late learned and worthy predecessor, the Reverend Mr. JOHN WHITE*, whose light is not yet gone out, and whose name ought to be had in everlasting remembrance.

* Author of *Letters to a Gentleman dissenting from the Church of England*, and other pieces, which were well received.

The

The first difficulty I was under, and that a very great one, was owing to an habitual neglect of the communion in too many of the congregation: on which account, I laboured in the pulpit, and out of it, to produce some reformation; and not in vain; for we have many more communicants than formerly. But alas! how often have I been distressed with visiting people in their last sickness, who had never attended the communion in all their lives! In some few cases, they had been misguided by vain fears, and the influence of ill advice; all arising from an ignorance of the subject; but in many others, this neglect arose from the want of a godly sense of the deceitfulness of sin, and the great danger of a careless life unrepented of: and seeing too many others in the same way, they were encouraged (or rather they encouraged themselves) to go on to their lives' end in the same fatal error. It is sorrow enough to a minister to attend a parishioner to his grave, and to see the dust thrown upon a person with whom he had conversed, and to whom he had preached; this is sufficient of itself; but when the consideration is added, that he had neglected the terms of his salvation; that he had been often called upon in

the exhortation of the church (a powerful address upon the subject) but never prevailed upon; that now there is no farther exhortation to be used, no opportunity in the grave; this is a greater sorrow to every considerate mind; and I wish to God I may feel less of it for the time to come.

Another evil is the prevailing practice of excessive drinking, with all its fearful consequences; of which, as you all know, there are too many examples; and I fear the rising generation is likely to furnish more. I cannot stay now to set before you the sin, and shame, and danger of this vice; I have done this at other times: I have shewed you how it is attended with loss of time, of health, of substance; to the injury of a poor family; the hardening of the conscience; the quenching of God's grace, till the light of religion is turned into total darkness. From the havock this sin makes in mens' minds, bodies, and estates, too much can never be said against it: and as it is a fearful thing to be a partaker in other mens' sins, when every man has too many of his own to answer for; therefore if there be any here present, who, from the deceitful calculations of worldly interest, are tempted to encourage their neighbour to this folly

folly and excess, and urge him on to abuse and ruin himself; I beseech them to consider what they are doing, and to hear that warning voice of the prophet—*Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink; that putteſt thy bottle to him, and makeſt him drunken alſo, that thou mayeſt look on their nakedneſs*—that thou mayst see them stripped of their reason, when they are turned fools, and their *minds* are naked; and see them also stripped of their property, after they have sat swallowing liquor, till there is not a penny left in their pockets. He that strips a man upon the highway has all the sin to himself; but he that strips a man in this way, has his neighbour's sin, as well as his own, to answer for: and it is justly to be apprehended, that the providence of God, in many instances, brings ruin instead of riches, and disappointment instead of success, from all that sort of gain which arises from the corruption of other mens' morals. So the prophet tells us, that there is a cup of judgment which comes round at last, to give them their reward in kind, and make them vomit up what they have unjustly gotten. On which consideration I entreat all those, whose occupation exposes them to this danger, to be aware of it, and guard against

it as well as they can; with this assurance, that he who grows rich by other mens' ruin, takes a fire into his bosom, which may lie there smothered for a time, like embers under the ashes, but will too surely break out at last into a flame, the effects of which will be felt, when the cause is forgotten.

Another evil, and to the great misfortune of this country, an increasing evil in many places, is that of fornication, which brings an unhappy and unpromising race of children upon a parish, who grow up half disowned and neglected, with the influence of an evil example from their parents, added to the influence of a corrupt, uncultivated nature; and who, if they live, will perhaps bring another breed of the same sort, and so on to the end of the world; to the great corruption of the youths of both sexes, and the impoverishing of those who live honestly, and are obliged to assist in the maintaining of such, as become chargeable to others from vice and idleness. Something might be done toward the lessening of this evil, if the officers of a parish would bestir themselves, as they are all bound to do in reason and conscience, and some of them by the sacred obligation of an oath. The lower class of people will certainly make

make light of this evil, if those who are above them do nothing to prevent it. A minister, according to his duty, represents the miserable consequences of this unlawful commerce; how it is attended with loss of conscience, loss of character, the destruction of family-happiness, the forfeiting of God's blessing, the prospect of beggary, infamy, and eternal damnation. These things he may represent; but unless admonition is seconded with some activity, and some authority from the laws, it will not be of sufficient weight; because, when things are left to this, and reformation is forwarded by nothing but admonition, it looks as if people were not in earnest.

Another evil is the profanation of the Sabbath. We have too many examples of persons exercising their worldly business in defiance of sobriety and decency; of others absenting themselves from the church for years together, and attending no other place of worship; as if it were the opinion of the place, that men are at liberty to live without God in the world.

Of all these abuses which I have set before you, there is not one, for the preventing of which I am not ready to do my part: but it is the chief business of this discourse to re-

mind you, that I can do nothing of myself, against the sense, and without the hearty concurrence of my neighbours. When the minister of a parish stands single in the exercise of discipline and the work of reformation, he can only make himself enemies, who will hate him without a cause, instead of amending themselves.

In an age when civil and ecclesiastical authority are both grown decrepit with old age and want of exercise, the defects of lawful government must be supplied by confederacies and associations of one party against another. This is a poor substitute for regular authority; but in some cases, it is the best the times allow us. Therefore, they who wish to preserve order, must unite against those who wish to break it. There is nothing that appears odious in the application of such remedies as the law affords, if the many unite against the few, who are then left without that countenance and defence which they borrow from the neglect of their superiors. The minister can do little for his parish in this way, unless the majority are with him, and desire that he should succeed. Indeed it is universally true, that nothing can be done for those who will do nothing for themselves.

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It is thus in the education of youth, and the instruction of the ignorant; none can be taught to much purpose, but they who are desirous to learn. Even God's grace works only with those who will work along with it: Yea, and our blessed Saviour himself, when upon earth, though ever ready to do good, could do none to those who were not disposed to look for it, and ready to receive it.

I wish to see this place a pattern of regularity and sobriety, not an example of drunkenness, profaneness and ill-manners. If ever I hear it spoken of under this latter character, I am hurt and grieved, as if I had heard some evil report against myself, or my own family. And does it not concern you, my Brethren, to feel as much for yourselves as I feel for you? Religion, reason, and good policy, the authority of God, and the common sense of man, call upon you to do what you can against the spreading evil of bad examples and corrupt communications. Vice is an expensive thing to all that practise it, and to all that connive at it. A wicked parish will ever be an idle parish; and an idle parish (as men are to live by their industry) must be a poor parish; and the more the poor increase in any place, the fewer shoulders are left to bear the

burthen;

burthen; and then some who do not deserve it, and have no share in the general corruption, are broken down with the weight of it.

I am sometimes very uneasy when I revolve these things in my mind: yet under all these difficulties, I have two considerations on which to repose myself. I have lived long enough in the world to know, that however sincerely a man may wish to have every body do what is right, he must be content to see much evil which he cannot prevent, and to hear many falsehoods which he can never hope to silence. If it is his desire to resist prevailing evils, they will not be imputed to him, though he should not succeed: let those look to it, who might forward his good intentions and do not. The other consideration, with which I comfort myself, is this, and a very common one it is; that if we cannot do as much as we would, we must still be willing to do as much as we can. If some advantages are denied to us, others will always be left to us. I can instruct the children of my parish; I can visit the sick, and comfort those who have no comforter but God and myself; I can help the poor in some of their occasional distresses; and (with God's help) I can preach the gospel freely; and if my labours

bours should not prosper here so much as might be wished, and my evening lectures should not be so well attended as when novelty recommended them, I must then consider my country as my parish, if it will give me leave; I must hope that what I speak here, will be better attended to somewhere else, and be doing some good, when I can speak no longer. In the mean time I shall not be discouraged: this sermon may do more good than I can yet foresee, and may stir up some others to be like-minded with myself. God send it may do so; the advantage will not be to me, but to us all: and as the time is approaching, when some yearly regulations are to take place, I trust you will all remember what has now been said to you. I have only to tell you farther, that the time is short; and that all worldly interests and worldly considerations will soon be of no value to any of us: but that the zeal we exercise for the honour of God, and the benefit of the place in which we live, will follow us into the grave, and rise with us again to judgment; when they *that have done good shall go into life everlasting.*

SERMON

SERMON IX.

YE HAVE THE POOR WITH YOU ALWAYS, AND WHENSOEVER YE WILL, YE MAY DO THEM GOOD. MARK XIV. 7.

WHEN we enquire into the œconomy either of the natural or the moral world, we are anxious to account for the origin of evil; so in the political world, a like queſtion may be raised concerning the origin of poverty; how it comes to pass, that, as the text asserts, *we have the poor with us always?* Why could not all men have been born in the same ſtation, and lived together on terms of equality, like the oaks of the forest, or the lillies of the field, or the cattle which feed upon a thousand hills? When we see but a little way into the constitution of things, we may perplex and distress ourselves with such questions:

questions: but when we see farther, we shall discover, that the general form and condition of society in civilized states is as much the appointment of God, as the form and structure of the human body; and that the several orders of which it consists, are as necessary and useful to each other, and as fully display the wisdom of God, as the head of all government, and the author of all regularity; as the limbs, and members, and faculties, of the body demonstrate his power and goodness as the Creator of the world.

Man, without society, would be what the world was in its chaos, when it was dark, and void, and formless: and He who brought it out of that state, and divided the lights of the firmament, the clouds, the air, the waters of the ocean, and the fixed body of the earth, into their several distinct regions; hath with equal wisdom brought men out of their barbarous state, such as they would be in by nature, to be divided into classes, offices, and employments; each in due subordination, and all serviceable to one another; for there is no plan of God's establishing, in which all the parts do not work together for the good of the whole.

Two

Two societies were certainly formed under God's immediate direction, the common-wealth of Israel, and the Christian church; and in neither of these did he set men in a state of equality. The apostle St. *Paul* enforces a comparison between the body natural and the body ecclesiastical; shewing how God hath tempered all the members together, and that those which *seem to be more feeble* * are necessary to the rest.

We can all see that the strong are necessary to the weak, and the rich to the poor; but that the poor are also necessary to the rich, does not appear so immediately: yet they certainly are so, both in a civil and in a religious capacity. Many offices must be performed, and much work must be done for the service of society, which will never be done, either by the proud or the indolent, or the effeminate. It would be as reasonable to expect, that those works should be executed by the hands of men, which are proper to horses and bullocks, appointed by God's providence for such ends, and furnished with strength and patience to fit them for the business they were

* 1 Cor. xii. 22.

intended

intended to perform. So much for the civil capacity of men: when we consider them in their religious capacity, it appears that they have works to do for the service of God, and for the benefit of their souls; as they have other works to be performed for the ends of common life. In human society, men are related to one another, and work for one another; in religious society, they are all related to God, and are to work, in another way, for his glory, and the salvation of their own souls; approving themselves, in their several orders and degrees, as the subjects of that community, of which God is the head, and in which he is the only lawgiver. All have their proper parts assigned to them, together with their proper stations; and all are to do their duty in that state of life unto which it hath pleased God to call them. The poor are to be contented with their lot, as being the appointment of God; and the rich are to be careful of the poor, as holding of God in trust for that purpose, and accountable to him as stewards and overseers. They could not approve themselves to God by giving such an account, if there were no poor. In such a case, one general scheme of selfishness and independence would prevail,

prevail, useless to man and dishonourable to God.

It would be easy to shew, that there is perfect justice as well as wisdom in this distribution of things; no partiality, no respect of persons. The rich have a sort of superiority, which is temporary, transient, and dangerous: the poor, with their low station, have health, and safety, and a better disposition to receive the gospel. Heathens could see, in ancient times, that poverty was the *school of virtue*; and many of them on that ground, affected voluntary poverty, and made an ostentatious shew of their rags. But whatever the abuses of Heathens might be, poverty among Christians is certainly a preparatory exercise of the mind for the reception of truth, and consequently for the belief of the gospel. Thus then we are to make our estimate; that if the poor are rich in faith, and have laid a foundation for eternity, they have nothing to complain of: while the rich, on the other hand, have no reason to boast of that wealth or that honour, which will set them never the higher in the kingdom of heaven; and too often disqualifies them for a place there. Thus the ways of God are equal, where they seem,

seem, to us, to be unequal; and the several parts of society, like the several parts of the creation, serve in a wonderful manner toward the common good.

By a sort of writers, who call themselves moral philosophers, I have seen it lamented that there is such a thing in the world as *exclusive property:* and they think it a great pity that this evil cannot be prevented. But the poor, considered as a link in the chain of society, are of God's making; and, to speak in the language of an apostle, *the foolishness of God is wiser than men**; that is, the ways of God, which seem most exceptionable, are so only because they are superior to our wisdom, and higher than our thoughts. They who would make a better religion than God hath revealed, are tempted by their vanity to expose the shallowness of their reason: and the case is the same with those, who would alter that form of society which God hath ordained, and *mend* it; as if Providence had committed a *mistake*, where it has given us a demonstration of infinite wisdom and goodness. All this arises from an affection toward high things, and an indisposition to

* 1 Cor. i. 25.

condescend to men of low estate. Such is the error of man's imagination, that it always inclines to the side of pride and haughtiness, the first sin that was infused by the author and father of pride. As the worldly-minded Jew could see nothing wonderful or necessary in the story of Bethlehem, and the manger, and the shepherds; so the haughty philosopher thinks the world would do better, if there were nothing low in human life, nor any thing higher than himself; as if the creation could be improved, by taking the sun, moon, stars, air, earth, and waters, and stirring them all together into one horizontal miscellany. If there had been no poor in the world, Christ could not have submitted to that state which was necessary to our salvation. He was born in poverty; of parents not thought good enough to be provided with room in a common inn, but shut out to make room for their betters, and lodge with beasts in a stable. Let us not wonder that the contemplation of this history of our Saviour's birth inspired many saints and hermits with the love of poverty. If all men were duly affected by it, and compared it properly with their own unworthiness, the proud would lay aside their plumes, the ambitious would be ashamed

ashamed of their popularity, and kings would throw down their crowns and scepters to the earth.

From the foregoing considerations, it appears to be a part in the plan of Divine Providence that we should *have the poor always with* us. To this plan the social laws of God are accommodated, which prescribe condescension, compassion and almsgiving on the one side; contentment, industry, and submission on the other. Without this, the moral government of God, and the social duties of man, would have been imperfect; and it does not appear how the scheme of our salvation, by the birth and humiliation of Jesus Christ, could have taken effect. We have, therefore, every reason to conclude, that what *is*, in this respect, *is right*; and that the poor do not exist by accident, but by preordination.

If this doctrine is important enough in itself to merit our serious meditation, it is still more so in the uses we are to make of it. The goodness of God could, and if it had been best, would have prevented, the wants of the poor; but now we see a reason why he did not. The poor have their wants, that the rich may be blessed with the opportunity of relieving them: a duty very earnestly enjoined

in many places of the scripture, and suppoſed in those words of the text—*whensoever ye will ye may do them good.* Too many have the ability without the will to do them good; others say, they are sure they should have the will, if they had the ability. But this will is amongst the other gifts of God, and is always most to be depended upon when it arises from a religious principle. It is then neither subject to be defiled by vanity and hypocrisy, nor defeated by capricious humour and partiality.

I do not mean to move you with an afflicting representation of the evils of poverty; I would rather apply myself to your reason and your consciences than to your imaginations: but my subject obliges me to mention them; because it requires me to shew how, and in what respects, we are to *do* the poor *good* according to their wants; after which, I shall endeavour to inforce the obligations we are under, and the encouragement we have to relieve them.

It is a common observation, that one half of the world knows but little what the other half is doing and suffering. While the licentiousness of the rich is studying how to provoke appetite with variety; the poor are either half-

half-filled, or satisfied with what the delicate would disdain to feed upon. While indolence is enjoying its ease, and proud of the contemptible privilege of having nothing to do; they are seeking bitter bread by severe labour. Their occupations expose them to all the varieties of the weather; at noon day they are wasted with the heat, and at night they are wetted with the dew of heaven. While others are spending their precious hours in a vain and fruitless adorning of their persons, they are too frequently exposing themselves to the air when they are heated with hard labour; and thence are subject to pains in their joints, stiffness in their limbs, and premature old age and decrepitude. Other hardships are brought upon them by the contempt and oppression of their superiors; I will not call such people their *betters.* Some men carry themselves with a lofty air toward the poor, as if they were of some lower species of animals: and as if contempt were not sufficient, others proceed to injury and oppression; nor are there wanting those who are said to *grind the faces of the poor* *; that is, who are mean enough to make a property of them;

* Isa. iii. 15.

extorting unjust and paltry gains out of a poor man who has nothing to part with; nothing but what is necessary to his life and being: so that their attempt has as little sense and as little mercy in it, as if they were to grind off something from the skin and the flesh of his face.

But the greatest wants of the poor, and those which I am directed by the present occasion chiefly to insist upon, arise from their ignorance, and their inability to procure necessary instruction. Whatever they may suffer from their bodily wants, the wants of the mind are of much greater consequence. It is one privilege of the rich, that they have it in their power to cultivate their understandings; though many of them neglect it, and are weak enough to think their wealth a substitute for education and improvement. But the poor, without the assistance of the rich, have no such opportunity. Some of them are, and some are not sensible of their loss; but it is very great to all those, who, for want of timely instruction, are not able to read the word of God. When we meet with a poor family, in which neither the father nor the mother is able to read, what a prospect is there before the children of such parents! If

many fall a prey to vice, who have been well taught in their childhood, what must become of those who are left to their natural ignorance? We are all sensible, that bodily blindness is a miserable defect; but certainly ignorance, which is the blindness of the soul, is much worse; because it is more dangerous to fall into a profligate course of life, than into a pit; and worse to lose the soul, than to bruise the limbs: and when ignorance is led by passion, *the blind leading the blind*, what but ruin can be expected to the mind and manners?

The poor, who with their children are in a place where they may have them taught for nothing, and despise or neglect the opportunity, will have both their own ignorance and that of their children to answer for. God is said to have winked at the ignorance of the heathen world, because it is not expected that men should see in the dark: but such ignorance, as may be prevented, and is not, will be considered as a love of darkness. We think it a very preposterous passion, when a white inhabitant of Europe falls in love with a black savage; but it is more unaccountable that a Christian, who is born among the children of light, should be fond of that ignorance, which

was the misfortune and curse of the heathen world.

Now we have taken a prospect of these evils, let us consider the obligations we are under to find a remedy for them. And the first obligation is that of gratitude; when we remember our own dependence upon God, and the blessings we receive from his bounty. If we have any portion among the good things of this life, it is he *who giveth us all things richly to enjoy;* and the offerings we make out of what we have are so many acknowledgements that we have nothing but what we have received. *All the beasts of the forest,* says he, *are mine, and so are the cattle upon a thousand hills.* No sacrifice therefore could be offered to God under the law, but of that which was already his own. And the case is the same now: God is the real proprietor of all things; *the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof:* so that we can make no return to God, but of that which was his own before.

The obligation we are under to do this, is farther evident on a principle of distributive justice. That inequality of possession, which is both wise and necessary, does not proceed from any respect to particular persons; *for the*

mercies

mercies of God are over all his works; but God has been pleased to put the allowance of one man into the hands of another, for a trial of his virtue; so that the rich are guilty of fraud and injustice if they either keep it, or bestow it wantonly upon themselves. *Withhold not good,* saith the wise man, *from them to whom it is due*;* as if charity were not a gift, but a debt. As such it is spoken of in the New Testament: *Charge them that are rich—that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate;* the original means, willing to make that *common,* which God intended to be so; at least, amongst the household of faith; in which they that have most are stewards for the rest.

But our obligations as Christians is plainest of all from this consideration; that God doth not require us to do any thing for the poor, but what he himself hath done for us, in a sense infinitely superior. If he commands us to visit them, he himself, as *the day-spring from on high, hath visited us:* If he commands us to give bread to the hungry, he himself hath given to us the bread of life. Who is it that commands us to clothe the

* Prov. iii. 27.

naked,

naked, but he who hath put the *best robe* upon his returning prodigal, and clothed us with the garments of his own righteousness, which shall never decay? as a sign of which, the clothes of his people did neither wear out nor wax old, neither their shoes upon their feet, in their journey through the wilderness. Who is it that expects we should teach the ignorant, but he who hath taught us by his holy word, opening to us all *the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, and giving light to them that sit in darkness? Few exhortations will be wanting to those who believe these things, and are sensible of their own obligations to God as the Saviour of sinners: the love of God is already shed abroad in their hearts, and charity to man will be the fruit of it. Happy are they who act on such liberal and sublime principles: it is their pleasure, as well as their honour to be doing good. Far from looking with an evil eye upon their poor brethren, they rejoice that there are any poor to be relieved; they would never wish to be without them; and they are thankful for the opportunity of assisting them; and if the poor do not look for them, they look for the poor.

But besides the obligations which arise from the consideration of what is past, we are encouraged to do good to the poor from the

the expectation of future blessings. And here let me observe, that no kind of charity answers better in this world than that which provides for the teaching of the children of the poor. It shews them the way, and it gives them the power of becoming useful members of society; it introduces them to the knowledge of God's holy will and commandments; it sets before them the reasons, the measures, the rewards of those duties, by means of which they are to prosper now, and be happy hereafter. Superior talents, with good principles, may lawfully raise the poor above the level of their birth; but it cannot be expected that this should happen, without the advantage of an early education. I have known some instances of poor children, who have attained to credit and affluence, by the help of that learning, which they obtained from the hand of charity; and who lived to make returns of gratitude to the persons from whom they had received it. Where the seed of instruction has fallen into a proper soil, there have undoubtedly been many examples of the same kind, which never came to the knowledge of myself, or of any that are here present. But with all this, we are to consider, that if a charitable education

should

should never raise them to wealth, it may do more; it may be the saving of their souls: and though the effect in this case is not so conspicuous as if it mended their fortune, it may be of greater value, though but little heard of; for the advancements of piety are secret and silent, and better known to God than to man.

This is an encouragement which relates only to them that receive: they who are the givers have something higher to expect; and the case is stated to us in such a manner as is well worthy of our attention. *He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again**. To the charitable man the proprietor of heaven and earth is a debtor, and will assuredly pay him in another life, and probably in this also. There are some sins which meet with their punishment even in this world; I look upon the oppression of the poor to be of that number: therefore by parity of reason, the same attention of Providence which punishes some, will reward others; especially as the author of all good is more ready to bless than to afflict. He does the one

* Prov. xix. 17.

unwillingly;

unwillingly; the other is the natural fruit of that mercy which is over all his works.

So much for this world: but when the great day of retribution shall come, then our blessed Saviour will consider himself as the object of what we have done to his *poor brethren.* *I* was an hungered, says he, and ye gave me meat: *I* was thirsty and ye gave me drink; *I* was naked and ye clothed me *. When he was manifested in the flesh, he joined the party of the poor, not of the rich nor honourable. We are all ready to own him under the majestic part of his character; for human vanity loves to attach itself to what is great and splendid: but *this is* the trial of our affection; whether we can condescend to him as the advocate and brother of the poor; whether we can make ourselves poor with him, who was poor with us; who submitted to the condition of a *servant,* that he might bring down the pride of man, and prepare him for exaltation by self-abasement; the hardest, and therefore the greatest of all the christian virtues.

Upon the whole, in order to fulfil the duty which is due from the rich to the poor, it is

* Matth. xxv. 35.

good

good that there should be a natural tenderness of the mind, which makes it susceptible of what is called compassion; which, if it is not a virtue of itself, is nearly allied to it; it is the soil of virtue, and a rich one too, on which many excellent fruits may grow. *Did not I weep*, says Job, *for him that was in trouble? was not my soul grieved for the poor* ?*

To this disposition we are to add the obligations of gratitude, and justice, with the encouragement arising from the hope of a blessing upon us in this world, and the next. But if all these considerations should be insufficient, there remains one more, which is the fear of punishment, and as it is urged in the book of *Job*, with all the vehemence and zeal of a godly mind, it seems irresistible: *If I have with-held from the poor their desire—If I have eaten my morsel myself alone—If I have seen any perish for want of clothing—If I have lift up my hand against the fatherless; then let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and let mine arm be broken from the bone: for destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure†.*

* Job xxx. 25. † Job xxxi. 16, &c.

He

He means, that God will destroy those who can bear to see others destroyed; and that this consideration had raised a terror in his mind which he could never resist. The same sentiment is more forcibly expressed in another place; where, on a supposition of any neglect in this matter, he asks, *what then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth what shall I answer him?* To some of his servants God hath committed more, to others less: to all will he come at last, and enquire how that which he committed hath been disposed of. Every man is now to consider, what *answer* he shall then give: and what will become of him if he should have no answer! Better would it be to suffer all the evils of poverty in this life, than to stand speechless in the great day of our final account. If this one consideration is duly weighed, we shall want no farther instruction in the duty of this day: we shall never see the *poor*, without being *willing* to *do them good*.

SERMON

SERMON X.

BLESSED IS HE THAT CONSIDERETH THE POOR AND NEEDY; THE LORD SHALL DELIVER HIM IN THE TIME OF TROUBLE. PSALM XLI. 1.

TO *consider* the poor, in the common acceptation of the phrase, is to give them something for the relief of their wants: but he only can be said to consider the poor in the true sense, who relieves them in consequence of having meditated on their condition, and his own duty. When the nature of the case hath been duly considered, few words will be wanting to enforce the practice of relieving the poor.

Poverty passes for a frightful subject, and the poor (especially in these times) for a troublesome

blesome class of people: but great instruction may be derived; and, I hope, some rational entertainment together with it, from a consideration of what I must call the *theory of poverty*.

When we meditate upon this subject, we discover, that poverty doth not appear in the world by accident, but by the pre-ordination of God. For, first, inequality of condition amongst mankind is absolutely necessary in a state of civilization. Many things must be done for the common good, which will never be done by the proud, the indolent, or the effeminate. They who can live without their own labour, (which, by the way, is no very great privilege) cannot live without the labour of others; as the head and the eyes cannot execute their own designs without the assistance of the hands and the feet. The same divine wisdom which hath tempered the body together, and made some of the parts subservient and necessary to others, hath appointed the like subordination in the political body of men in society.

But inequality amongst men is farther necessary for *moral* reasons. By being placed in different stations, men are called to the exercise of different duties: the poor to the duty

of submission; the rich to the duty of compassion. The rich are to be served by the poor, and the poor are to be protected and relieved by the rich. Unless there were want in some, God could not be served by the bounty of others. Nothing can be more evident, than that some are entrusted by Providence to take care of others. And hence we infer, that if they assume an exclusive right to what they have, they are contradicting the designs of Heaven; and that a want of charity is a breach of trust; an offence which, under certain circumstances, may be more base and sinful than robbery itself. "*Charge* them who are rich," saith the apostle. It is not said, admonish and persuade, as if they were at liberty; but give it in charge, as a matter of indispensable duty and justice. We hold it to be a great sin, when a servant defrauds his master, or wasteth his goods: But the very same sin is committed, with many aggravations, when the rich waste upon their own pride or pleasure that superfluity, which was put into their hands, that they might supply what is left wanting to others. God is the common master of all; their goods are his goods; and if these are misapplied or wasted by some of his servants,

servants, other servants of the same master will be suffering under the fraud; for which, they who are guilty of it, will be called to account, when the day of reckoning shall come.

To rectify that inequality which Providence permits for the wisest ends, the primitive Christians cast all their property into a common stock, out of which an equal distribution was made, as every man had need. None could be idle; none could be extravagant; none could be drunkards or profligates: if they did not *work*, it was the apostolical rule that they *should not eat;* and none could hope to obtain any allowance for the support of their vices. Let every Christian ask himself, whether, if it were now required, he could submit to this charitable regulation; or, whether the proposal would send him away *sorrowful?* Out of the apostolical fund, a society of devout widows were provided for, who employed themselves in all works of charity; such as those of making garments to clothe the poor, distributing the alms of the church, and assisting in the service of God. Such an institution cannot take place in these days; but the law will be in force to the end

of the world, that the strong should uphold the weak, and the rich relieve the poor.

It may seem to us, upon a superficial view, that Providence hath been partial in distributing the good things of this world, and hath made some happy and others miserable by their birth and station. But when the advantages and disadvantages are laid together, we shall find, that the ways of God are just and equal toward all men. Rich persons are tempted, in consideration of their wealth, to be proud, insolent, and wasteful; to trust in this world, and to be forgetful of God: and hence we are told, that but few of them are fit for the kingdom of heaven. The poor, under all their present disadvantages, are more frequently blessed with an humble mind, and look up to God for that happiness which they do not find here: therefore Jesus Christ, when he preached the Gospel, chose the poor for his hearers: while those of higher life and prouder education had no respect to his person, and were only hurt by his doctrines. By the reception of the gospel, the poor are made *rich in faith*, and so have nothing to complain of; and the rich have but little reason to boast of a very perilous situation.

Upon

Upon the whole, the rich and the poor are necessary to one another; the difference between them is agreeable to the designs of God's providence and his moral government of the world; and when the account is balanced, all is just and equal. If there were no poor, there could be no alms: if all were equal, a spirit of independence and selfishness would prevail, which is most hateful to God. Every man would then *live to himself*, which no man ought to do; and he would also *die unto himself;* none would want him; none would miss him. How far better is it, that there should be the generous feelings of humanity on the one side, and an humble dependence on the other.

But besides all the foregoing considerations, the condition of poverty was necessary to the humiliation of Jesus Christ. The Saviour of mankind was to visit a world corrupted with pride, and lost in sin: he therefore took upon himself that state of poverty, which was *satisfactory* to God, and *exemplary* to man. He that was rich in heaven, became poor on earth for our sakes, and took the *form of a servant*, the lowest condition of life. While the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air nests, he had not where to lay his head. While he fed

hungry multitudes by a miracle, he was himself dependent on the liberality of those who ministered unto him. So noble and divine was this voluntary poverty of the Son of God, that many have been in love with poverty, and have taken it upon themselves for his sake; leading a life of obscurity and abstinence, while the world was not worthy of their virtues. And where is the mighty difference? So short is the time of man, that the distinctions of this world are but shadows; his great object is to get safe to heaven; and he may make his way more safely in poverty than in riches. What is salvation but an escape from shipwreck? and he who swims naked and unprovided, is more likely to reach the heavenly shore.

Poverty, in itself, is a low thing; but you see it is a great subject. However, it is time, now, to leave our contemplations, and proceed to the duty of relieving the poor.

The things necessary to man's *natural* life, are meat, drink, and cloathing; to his *civil* or *social* life, knowledge and learning; to his *spiritual* life, the faith, hope, and charity of a Christian. Therefore, the three great evils of poverty, are hunger, and nakedness, and ignorance; and consequently the three great works

works of charity corresponding thereto, are the feeding, the cloathing, and the teaching of the poor.

That it is a good work to feed the hungry, and to clothe the naked, is universally allowed; and the sight is pleasant, which we have now before us, of such decency and comfort in so many children of the poor. It is pleasing to us all: but it must be so in a more especial manner to their benefactors, who have a nearer interest in the case. Thus far, then, we are all agreed, that it is good to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked: but I have heard it questioned, whether it be expedient or charitable to *teach the poor.* You may be surprised at this; but I can assure you it is very true; and the arguments by which the objection is supported, are these; viz. that learning tends to lift the poor out of their sphere, or tempts them to affect things above their station; and, which is worst of all, gives them ability to do that mischief in society, which they could not have done, if they had been left to their own ignorance. The objection against any thing good, which is drawn from the possibility of its being abused, is the weakest as well as the most common; for all things in this life are abused;

and if we were to drop them one after another on that account, we should have nothing left. In the present subject, all arguments against the teaching of the poor may be answered on this one consideration, that God hath given to man a *revelation in writing;* it must therefore be good for man to *read.* But how shall the poor read, unless they are taught? and if they cannot pay for their own teaching, others must pay for it who can afford it better: and in so doing, they are undoubtedly fulfilling the will of God. If learning enables the poor to raise themselves above their station, in God's name, let them do it, if they can: the pen of business is a more innocent and useful instrument than the sword of war, by which so many have raised themselves from a low station to wealth and honours. If learning disposes the poor to be discontented with their condition, it ought not to do so, because the remedy goes with the temptation. When they are taught to write and read, they receive religious instruction at the same time; they are taught, that their duty is to be done in *that state of life to which God hath called them;* and they may thence infer, that discontent is an act of rebellion against his Providence; and will forfeit

his

his favour, the loss of which is worse than death. In an age, when vain and corrupting publications abound without any restraint, reading may be a dangerous employment; and many, who read only to amuse the imagination, have read themselves into idleness and beggary. I have heard of a mother, who hath gone into a workhouse with a novel in her hands, followed by a family of poor ragged children. But then, reading is not taught with this view: for there is the reading of wisdom, and the reading of folly; and they are at their liberty to take the one, or the other. Life and death are set before all, as the two trees were planted for the trial of our first parents in Paradise; and if some are so infatuated by passion as to make choice of death, many will prefer the worst sort of reading; such as will corrupt the mind, as surely as death corrupts the body. But this danger ought to be no discouragement: it proves nothing, but that *good*, by an abuse of it, may be turned into *evil;* and that the world abounds with temptations to sin.

But now, if some are disposed to plead against learning from the possible danger of it; it is but fair, that they should consider how the case stands with *ignorance*. *There* the

the danger is *certain.* Leave nature to itself, say some, and it will go right; but, that I deny. Leave the land to itself, and see what will happen; you will soon find it covered with weeds; and the stronger the soil, the fouler it will grow, if it is neglected. It is thus with the heart of man; which must be cultivated, and sown with good seed, before any fruits can be gathered from it: and by neglect, the weeds of nature become so deeply rooted, that nothing but a miracle of grace can extract them. In the account which is given of felons and malefactors, or which they have given of themselves, I never heard of one that imputed his ruin to his learning; but of numbers who have laid it wholly to their ignorance; which ignorance proceeded either from the want of instruction, or their own indisposition to receive it. Some were neglected by bad parents; some had no teachers; others had them, and ran away from them, because they were idle and ill disposed; as if there were a mutual antipathy between vice and learning.

The profligacy of the lowest order of people, in this age and nation, hath of late become so alarming to the public, (who know not what cause to ascribe it to, but

to

to a general want of *teaching*) that Sunday schools have lately arisen out of the evil, as the most promising remedy; and I trust in God, we shall, in a few years, see the benefit of them. They must tend to remove that ignorance of the common people, which hath, of late years, so filled our gaols, and occasioned such numberless executions. A worthy clergyman who had attended an unhappy criminal, lately condemned and executed for a shocking murder, told me he found him in total ignorance: he had never been, to his own knowledge, within a church since he was baptized there; and seemed to have no sense of God or the devil, but such as had been collected from the oaths and curses of his wicked companions. This poor wretch, roused into a little sensibility by an approaching execution, had the elements of his catechism to learn, when he was going out of the world. This man is but the pattern of multitudes, who come daily, by the same way, to the same end. Upon the whole, if knowledge doth harm, it is by *accident*, and contrary to its nature; but ignorance destroys by *necessary consequence;* and therefore it is both wise and charitable to promote the teaching of the poor.

That

That this teaching may have the better effect, I must address myself in a few words to the children, who are supported by the charity of this day. If then the benefits of instruction are so apparent, it is your duty to value it accordingly, and receive it with attention and patience. Learning of every kind is the work of time; it comes by little and little, and more slowly to some than to others; but all must be improved by patience and perseverance. Remember how the grain, which the poor claim, as their portion from the rich, at this season of the year, is gathered up by single ears, for which they are patiently stooping all the day long, till they are wetted with the dew of heaven. We have seen the fields overspread with children at this employment; their parents encouraging them, and setting them the example. The fruits of learning, which you are gathering at school, are far more valuable and lasting: gather them therefore, with the like perseverance, and you will find at length, that as the single ears of the field rise insensibly to a burthen as large as you can bear; so will your learning increase in a few years to such a stock, as will be sufficient to carry you through the business of this world to a better.

Above

Above all, when you learn to read and write, learn to *pray.* Think how many fall into sin and misery, and the displeasure of God, because they were never taught to pray, or, because they would never learn. To walk without prayer, is to walk without God; and how miserable must that be in a world of such danger! If the *righteous man,* who lifteth up his eyes unto the everlasting hills, and prayeth daily for the help and protection of God, is *scarcely saved,* and escapes as *a brand plucked out of the fire;* what must become of those, who never pray at all? If we wrestle against principalities and powers, for which we are not a match; what must be the fate of those who have no helper? The poor and friendless orphan is in a hopeful state, when compared with the soul that has lost the presence of its heavenly Father, and, while it is under the weakness and poverty of nature, and the deceitfulness of sin, is left to the malice of its spiritual enemies. Make it, therefore, the first and the main business of your lives, to engage the power and goodness of God on your side, by learning to *call upon him at all times,* as your catechism directs, *by diligeut prayer.* We have a promise, that whosoever cometh to God by the prayer of faith, shall not be cast out: but, he who doth not pray,

casteth

casteth out himself; and to such all evil must follow of course, both in this world and the next.

This is a reflection which equally concerns us all; and brings us back to the duty of the text, and the promise which attends it. *If* God *be for us*, saith the apostle, *who can be against us?* and if God be against us, who, or what, can be for us, to do us any good? What will all the power, honour, and wealth of this world signify to that man, to whom the great God of heaven and earth is no friend? and if the indevout, who never pray, have no title to his favour, the unmerciful shall pray in vain: they never listened to the prayers and wants of others; and so their own prayers shall be fruitless. But, on the other hand, how *blessed is he that considereth the poor and needy*; *the* Lord *shall deliver him in the time of trouble.*

Blessedness, as the term is applied in the scripture, and particularly in the Psalms, denotes the happiness of man living under the approbation and favour of God, and taking pleasure in the way of his commandments. Such is the state of the blessed man in the first psalm: he is happy in himself, and his ways are prospered upon the earth. There is a farther

a farther blessedness in peace of conscience under a sense of the forgiveness of sin; as it is said, *Blessed is the man to whom the* LORD *will not impute sin.*

It is certainly one of the first blessings in this life, to be able and willing to relieve the wants of the poor; not only for the prospect of future good, but the enjoyment of present pleasure. For is it not a blessed privilege in the divine nature, that it can distribute to the wants of all, and *fill their hearts with food and gladness?* and can it be otherwise than a blessedness in man, when he partakes of the blessedness of God? Here pleasure and duty go together; and, doubtless, there are many good hearts which feel in themselves the blessedness pronounced upon them in the text. Man can be like unto God in no capacity so much as in that of being *glad to distribute:* and to this likeness we may aspire without ambition. In fact, we are commanded to propose God himself as a pattern to us. "Be ye perfect," saith our blessed Saviour, "even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Not perfect in wisdom, or power, or purity, but in *goodness:* distribute with kindness, and do good to all without partiality, even as He *maketh his sun to rise, and sendeth his rain*

on

on the just, and on the unjust. It is said of kings and magistrates, that they *are gods,* though they shall *die like men:* and *Moses* was made *a God unto Pharaoh,* with authority to execute vengeance on a proud prince, and a wicked people. This office we are not to desire; nor did *Moses* desire it: he was the *meekest* of men in his temper, and therefore God chose him as a fit instrument for the inflicting of his judgments; who could drive the furious blast with calmness and serenity. He is the proper minister of vengeance, who can execute it without wrath. Our blessed Saviour, to whom *all judgment is committed,* was the mildest and the most lowly in his conversation upon earth. In this capacity of a judge, we are not called to imitate him: but all may go about *doing good*; and they who can do the most good, have the most pleasure within their power.

But there is now another sort of blessedness (and that more valuable to us in our present state) to which he shall be entitled, who considereth the poor and needy;—*the* LORD *shall deliver him in the time of trouble.*

In the days of youth, we are thoughtless and forgetful; in the days of prosperity, we are high-spirited and presumptuous; but the time

time of sorrow must overtake those who least think of it; and there are troubles in store, by which the highest minds shall be brought low, and the stoutest hearts shall be made to tremble. Then to find deliverance from the Lord, is the greatest blessedness of man; and consequently to secure it before hand, by shewing mercy to the poor, must be his greatest wisdom. Wealth being so often abused as a root of evil, is called the *Mammon* of *unrighteousness*; but by this wise application of it, we may provide to ourselves a sure *friend* in the day of our distress.

The troubles of man's mind are as many and as various as the diseases of his body, so that it were vain to number them: but there are some in particular, under which you must all see, that we can expect no deliverance but from God. There are cares and disappointments, brought upon us sometimes by our own oversights, sometimes by the perverseness and treachery of others, from which nothing can extricate us, but that Providence which ruleth over all, and worketh by ways which are secret and unexpected. And by some such way shall he be delivered, who hath *considered* others in their necessity.

There is another trouble, by which the mind is subject to be agitated; and which is often more afflicting than worldly sorrow: I mean remorse of conscience under a sense of guilt. Some men, when they have fallen into sin, seem to be as easy as they were before. This is a dreadful symptom. When a limb feels no pain from an incision, we know it is in a state of mortification; and ease, in such a case, is the forerunner of death. But a mind more tender, and of a godly frame, is often reduced to a fearful sense of past sins. Sorrow, and shame, and terror seize upon it like fiends, and threaten to tear it in pieces. Where can it look for deliverance at such a time, but to the grace of God, who hath promised forgiveness of sin? Neither the power of man, nor the comforts of the world, can reach this case. Spiritual griefs must have a spiritual remedy; and that remedy is with the great Physician of the soul, who alone can heal our sins, and help our infirmities. If he is sought at such a time of trouble, and *not found,* nothing remains but despair, which is the extremity of *trouble.* Many passages in the Psalms are written for the use and support of contrite minds, labouring under the

burthen

burthen of their sins: and by the charitable they shall not be uttered in vain. They that have shewed mercy shall find mercy, and be restored to peace of conscience.

Another time of *trouble* is the time of sickness. The help of God, under this trial, is particularly promised to the merciful, in the words which follow the text. *The Lord shall comfort him when he lieth sick upon his bed: thou shalt make all his bed in his sickness.* The scripture expresses all things in figure and metaphor, with great force and signification. The *making of the bed* is a relief to the sick, and sometimes the only relief they are capable of. How easy then must he lie, whose bodily sorrows are made lighter by a communication of ease and comfort from above! for an easy mind, which is the gift of God, will sustain all the infirmities of the body. How frequently and unexpectedly doth the blessing of God raise up the sick, whose life hath been despaired of: as it is here said, *The Lord shall preserve him and keep him alive, that he may be blessed upon the earth.* But some sickness must end in death; and when that *time of trouble* is approaching; when this world is vanishing from our sight, and we are departing into the world of spirits; how inestimable

is one ray of light from above, to cheer us in that hour of darkness! Who, that duly considers this in the days of health, would not *sell all that he hath, and give to the poor*, to purchase it?

But there is still another occasion of *trouble*, and that the greatest of all; when we shall be summoned by the trump of judgment to appear before the tribunal of Jesus Christ. Then must the rich and the poor, the weak and the powerful, stand naked and helpless before a Judge, who is no respecter of persons, but will demand an account of every man; of me that speak, and of you that hear; and reward them all according to their works. Who are they that shall be able to stand in that fearful day of reckoning? who, but they that have distributed of their abundance to the poor members of Jesus Christ? What is now done to them, will then be placed by him to his own account, as if it were done to himself. *I was naked*, saith he, *and ye clothed me; sick and in prison, and ye visited me.* To the rest, who bestowed their possessions upon themselves, and were unmindful of him, and of his poor brethren, he saith, *Depart from me, I know you not.*

Think

Think then, all ye that have ability; think what a serious trust is committed to you, and what great things depend upon a faithful discharge of it. We count the rich happy; we labour for wealth; we court popularity; we are proud of honours and titles; but all these things will fail us in *the time of trouble.* No man can be accounted happy, but he who shall find *deliverance* from God. This deliverance is promised to the charitable man; and the promise of God shall never disappoint him. In all the cares and vexations of life; in the temptations of prosperity, and in the sorrows of adversity; in health, and in sickness; in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment; *blessed is he that considereth the poor and needy; the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble.*

SERMON XI.

NOW CONCERNING THE COLLECTION FOR THE SAINTS, AS I HAVE GIVEN ORDER TO THE CHURCHES OF GALATIA EVEN SO DO YE:

UPON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, LET EVERY ONE OF YOU LAY BY HIM IN STORE, AS GOD HATH PROSPERED HIM. 1 COR. XVI. 1, 2.

HENCE we learn, that the custom of providing for the wants of necessitous Christians by a voluntary contribution, is as ancient as Christianity itself. The method ordained by the apostle in the churches of Galatia, and, by this precept of the text, in the church of Corinth also, was to lay by something in store weekly, according to the abilities of each, and the blessing of God upon their affairs; and at stated times, what was

so

so raised, was collected by the governors of the church, and distribution was made as every man had need; so that in the first ages, though there would of course be many poor in the church, because there were people of all orders converted to the faith, yet there were none without relief. If they were sick, or under persecution, or any other misfortune, they were the pensioners of the church, and their wants were supplied, as the charity and prudence of their rulers directed.

The text seems to call upon me to take a review of the modes of making collections for the poor, which have prevailed among Christians in different ages of the church. The subject is edifying in itself, and very interesting at the time when the poor are supported at so enormous an expence; which shews that they are strangely multiplied, and the causes of this deserve to be enquired into.

So great was the zeal of those who first embraced the gospel, that if they were wealthy they sold their possessions, and a common fund was raised, out of which the ministers of the church were maintained, and the poor relieved at their discretion.

Though this practice of selling all was really and readily observed by many we do not

find it was absolutely commanded. But this other custom of laying apart something every week was established by a standing order of the church, which extended to every member of it, according to their several abilities: *let every one of you,* says the apostle, *lay by him in store.*

When the church was farther spread, and better established, then the ancient rule took place amongst the Christians, of giving the tenth part of all their increase; which rule had been observed long before the law of Moses, and lasted, though with many abuses and interruptions, till the times of the gospel, when we hear the Pharisee boasting that he gave tithes of all he possessed. When Christianity was admitted into this country, the same practice came with it, which prevailed, as we learn from the writings of the first ages, in all other nations of the world. Christians gave a tenth part of the increase of their lands and chattels, and every article from which any gain or profit was derived. In process of time, the first hereditary Saxon monarch that governed the whole nation of England in peace, repeated what had been done in another form about an hundred years before; he gave to the church, by a solemn charter, with the

the presence and consent of the Lords and Commons, the tithes of the whole kingdom for ever, in the year of our Lord 855, and offered his charter upon the altar of the great church at Westminster, the bishops receiving it from his hands on the part of God. The piety of succeeding benefactors added many lands to the support of the church and religious monasteries; and out of these, churches and colleges were built: strangers and travellers were entertained; the poor were all fed, or set to work, and the sick received into infirmaries and almonries (or amberies) as they were then called. I do not pretend to say that there was no mixture of superstition in these things; that charity was not carried to excess; and that there were not many abuses in religious societies. It could not be otherwise; because there never was any good in this world, nor ever will be, without a mixture of evil. In this, however, as a fact, all writers agree, that it belonged to the church for many hundred years to take care of the poor out of their own revenues: and it was computed, in former times, that in all the parishes of England, taking them one with another, one-fourth part of the tithes of the parish

pariſh would, and actually did, maintain the poor.

Till the latter end of the reign of *Elizabeth*, there never was any tax laid upon England as a poor's rate. Before the reformation, the poor were kept by the clergy, with the voluntary contributions of well disposed people; but there was no such thing as a poor's rate. The bishops and clergy of different kinds, kept open hospitality for the benefit of strangers and travellers, and the poor of the neighbourhood; and were obliged so to do by their foundations: and it pleased God to bless these means to such a degree, that the poor were no burthen to the nation: not a penny was imposed upon any lay-man for maintaining them. But when the sacrilegious encroachments of Popery were confirmed at the Reformation, by the alienation of church lands, and the clergy were, thereby, impoverished; the laity who took them did not comply with the conditions of the tenure.

Reason and law suggest to us, that they, who got the lands of the church, took them with the encumbrance that was upon them. Out of those lands the poor had been maintained; therefore, they that took the lands should

should have taken the poor with them; and they made a great shew of doing it for a time, because that was the pretence with which they took them from the clergy: but when the fish was taken, the net was laid aside.

I need not inform you what state we are in at present, when the poor's rates are come to such an enormous height throughout the kingdom, that about the year 1700 they were computed at a million yearly: and from that time to this they have been more than doubled; so that there is more than twice as much paid to the poor, as is now paid to all the clergy in the kingdom. And in all this expence, there is no charity; no devotion as formerly; it is an *involuntary* payment, *forced* from us by law, and squeezed out of many, who are fitter to receive something for their own wants, than to contribute to the wants of others.

If there was a time, when one-fourth of the tithes was found sufficient to maintain the parish-poor, and the revenues of the national poor are now twice as great as the revenues of the church, thence it follows, that where they had *one* poor man we have *eight* throughout the kingdom, that is, 1000 poor instead of 125. It may please God still to increase

increase the poor, till they swallow up the rich who devoured them: for I think it requires no degree of superstition or credulity to see the hand of God in this whole matter.

Even heathens were persuaded that their gods were the avengers of sacrilege; and if it is a certain fact that the poor have increased as the church hath gone down, they who lessened the patrimony of the church brought upon us such an evil as might be expected; indeed, such as seems to follow naturally and necessarily; for *what a man soweth, that shall he also reap:* therefore, he that soweth in sacrilege must expect to reap in poverty. Even in this parish, there is a singular concurrence of circumstances: and if I speak of them, you all know me too well to suspect I have any design in it, but that of following the order of my subject; which has required me to give you a brief and impartial history of *collections for the poor*, and the nature of them in different ages. It is a fact known to us all, that in this place, no part of the property of the parish is settled upon the service of the church. The rectorial tithes are in the possession of a lay impropriator who is a papist; the vicarial are taken by the minister of another parish; and the only certain dependence

dependence of a minister is upon benefactions of a modern date from other quarters. So stands the case with the church. Now look at the poor; and you will find such a charge as occurs but in few parts of the kingdom; for the sum expended annually upon the poor amounts, one year with another, to three hundred and fifty pounds; that is, to more than one-fourth part of the whole rents of the parish. Amongst the rest of our national burthens, the single tax upon the land, a new imposition, never thought of till within the last hundred years, takes more from the landed interest, than would, at the time when it was imposed, have been sufficient to maintain all the poor in the kingdom: and these two burthens were neither of them felt by the nation while the poor were maintained by the church. So many ways has the providence of God of shewing us, that he is stronger than we are; and how little they are like to gain in the end, who mix sacrilege with their policy, and hope to enrich themselves by any act of impiety.

We can now only lament these things; we cannot correct them. We have no reason to think God will be reconciled to national sin, without national restitution; and there is less

hope of that every day. The work of Sir *Henry Spelman* *, shewing the manifest judgments of God upon the violation of churches and the usurpation of church lands, had its effect for a time, in some instances, but it is now almoſt forgotten. There are, indeed, some other leſser concurring causes to increase the burthen of the poor, to which prudence might apply some remedy: these are, firſt the corruption of morals amongst the poor; secondly, the indolence of persons of fortune and influence, who take no care of them; and thirdly, the laying of too many farms together, especially where *new enclosures* have taken place.

As to the firſt of these causes, when the state of the poor was inquired into, at the desire of government, by a person of great eminence for learning, in the year 1697; he delivered it, as his opinion, to the Lords Justices, that many of our grievances, in regard to the poor, arose from the toleration of tip-

* See the work of Sir *Henry Spelman*, *De non temerandis Ecclesiis.—A Tract of the Rights due unto Churches.* A work alarming in its subject, and unanswerable in its argument: the author of it being equally skilled in law and divinity.

ling

ling in public-houses; drinking spirituous liquors at private shops; and the wandering about of idle people, as beggars, without restraint, from their proper parishes. However great these evils might be at the time abovementioned, I fear they grew much worse afterwards. Of late years, indeed, the magistrates have been so sensible of the increase of poverty, from the increase of public-houses, that the number of them has been much diminished in many parts of the kingdom; and they are more cautious, than heretofore, in granting licences. I am not prepared to give you an exact history of the inn and the public-house in England. It seems there were no such common sources of corruption to the people, when travellers, in times of greater simplicity, were accommodated by charitable hospitality: and, bad as they are by their nature, they are become still much worse in practice since the common use of *spirituous liquors*, which is but of the last hundred years.

Another cause of our increasing rates, is that want of *public spirit*, and that *aversion to business*, which has prevailed of late years amongst our *gentry*; who leave the inspection of the poor wholly to their inferiors. I knew

knew a worthy person, of great piety, charity, and extensive learning, who was allowed to have great judgment in all national concerns, and was so well acquainted with the state of the poor, that none ever wrote better upon the subject than himself. It was an observation of his, that the rich are under a fundamental error, in supposing that the duty of alms-giving is the essential part of the comprehensive duty of charity; and so their object is rather to remove present misery, than to *prevent* it by encouraging piety, order, and good morals. Let gentlemen of fortune, said he, give more of their *time* to the poor, though they give less of their money, and then we shall have found out the grand secret for reducing the parish rates: the poor would then behave better, and cost less, and find themselves much happier than they do at present *.

* Paupers at London take collection from many parishes, at once, under false names. A spy is detected in a camp, by ordering all the soldiers to their tents; so these impostors might be detected by a muster, or roll-call, of all the parishes held at the *same time*; and every perſon so detected, should receive corporal punishment, and a brand of infamy on their forehead.

To

To these another cause may ſtill be added, which has had the unhappy effect of damping the industry of the poor, by taking away from them the hope of bettering their condition by good management: I mean the selfish practice of laying many farms into one, to save trouble and raise more money; whence it comes to pass, that labourers have not that encouragement to endeavour to advance themſelves and their families as they had formerly: in some places there are no small farms left for them, and they are not able to take a large one; in consequence of which they grow desperate in their poverty; and even where there are small farms, the profits are, in a manner, eaten up in many parishes, by burthensome rates and taxes.

I have now enumerated, to the best of my knowledge, and without concealing any part of the truth, the several causes which have contributed to increase the number of the poor, and to render them so burthensome, that they cannot always find a provision adequate to their wants in times of sickness and inability. Societies have, therefore, been formed, the members of which undertake, in the days of their health, to make a better provision for one another, out of a common

stock, than they could expect from the public, if they should ever be reduced to the necessity of applying for it. As I heartily approve of this design, and have given you my sentiments to that effect on former occasions, I shall now add such advice as may promote and secure the benefit to all those that are concerned in it; and I know not how to do this more effectually than by enforcing the exhortation of the Apostle, that each of you *lay by him in store as God hath prospered him.* For in order to do this, so as to keep up to the sense of the exhortation, he must be

1. *Prudent*; 2. *industrious*; 3. *sober*; and 4. *honest*; without which, he has no reason to expect that *God* will *prosper him.*

By prudence, I mean a proper attention to his affairs; which we call œconomy. It is as wicked to waste what God hath bestowed, as to deny it to him that is in need; and for this plain reason, because he who wastes what he has, will have nothing to give. Prudence in our affairs is a duty so necessary, that our blessed Lord, who was exemplary and instructive in his actions, as well as in his words, seems to have shewn a particular regard to it: *Gather up the fragments which remain,* said he, *that nothing be lost:* and if he, whose word

word alone was sufficient to provide for an hungry multitude in a wilderness; if he, I say, thought it expedient that we should make the most of his gifts, the same rule will oblige us to make the most of our own gains, and to take care *that nothing be lost.* It is a sort of tempting God, if we expect him to work two miracles, when a prudent application of one would answer the end. The means were miraculous the first time the multitude were fed; but they were natural when the fragments that had been laid up were distributed. It is the care of Providence to put us in a way, and do what we cannot do for ourselves; but it must be our care to make the most of his gifts by a prudent attention to them.

A second qualification, necessary to those who would lay by any thing, is *industry.* Idleness is the disgrace of human kind. It was made neither for the rich nor the poor; neither for man when he was in Paradise, nor now he is out of it. The body, the mind, and the estate, all suffer by it. It brings diseases upon the rich, and filthiness upon the poor: it weakens all the faculties of the mind, and leaves it empty and dissatisfied: it ruins the estate, because an idle disposition is for the most part attended with

expensive inclinations, while it brings in nothing for the supply of necessary wants. Idle people are generally vicious: they are idle because they are vicious; and vice always did cost more than virtue to maintain it. Instead of having any thing to *lay by*, idleness expects to receive that from the labours of others, which it does not deserve from any body. The idle man is to society, what a useless limb is to the body, which must be carried or *dragged* along by the rest; and if he is not troublesome to-day, he will be soon: for he that has neither house nor land, nor any useful employment, must be maintained either by beggary or by working in the dark, when other men are asleep: therefore, such people ought to be strictly watched; and every society has a right against them on a principle of self-defence; for he who does them no good, will very soon do them some mischief. In a neighbouring nation, celebrated for few virtues besides those of frugality and industry, they endure no idleness amongst them; so you see no beggars about their streets, and very seldom hear of any executions for felony. If any poor man turns idle, and admonition does him no good, they take the following method to make him work: they confine him

him in a large cistern, into which the water runs so fast, that unless he pumps it out with all his might for several hours, it will prevail over him and drown him. Our schools of labour are called houses of *correction;* but the place where this discipline is exercised, is called the *bettering house:* and if the first trial does not make a man *better*, they give him a second; and so on, till he is brought to reason with himself: then he discovers, that it will be *less trouble* to earn his living by moderate labour, than to do such hard work and get nothing by it. This, however, is a way of teaching men as we teach brutes, by compulsion. How much better is it to hearken and learn as children do, and be *bettered* by the instructions of wisdom! *Go*, then, *to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.*

But now, thirdly, I am to remind you, that he who would lay any thing by for charity, must be *temperate.* No man will ever be able to do much good to others, who does not lay some restraint upon himself. Intemperance is hurtful to the rich; but it is ruinous to the poor: and alas! we have too

many examples of it in all places; of men who spend all they have upon themselves, and sometimes more than they have, and live more like swine than Christians. If there should be any such here present, may God give them grace to understand rightly the miserable bondage into which they have been betrayed by ungoverned appetites; while, instead of fancied indulgence, they find nothing but real misery; the ingredients of which are the three great evils of human life, sickness, guilt, and poverty. If we were to follow some people of the lower class of life, to observe how they live, particularly those who are employed in handicraft trades, in the great metropolis of this kingdom; we should see them working hard for a few days, then taking their wages, and giving themselves up for as many days more to idleness and intemperance in a public-house. There they meet with others as idle as themselves; who are come upon the same errand, to waste their time and their money. They sit till all is spent, and, perhaps, till their senses are gone together with their money; but if not so bad as that, their consciences are wounded, and their peace of mind is destroyed; so that they have not one moment of rational enjoyment.

ment. In the mean time, if we were to see the unhappy wife of one of these free-livers, we should find her at home, with her poor, ragged, helpless children about her, hungering and thirsting for the fruit of their father's labour; with which, he is all the while abusing himself in other company. When all is gone, and he has time to think a little, the distress of his family stares him in the face; he is entertained with bitter accusations, which he has brought upon himself; and the cruelty and robbery he has been guilty of prey upon his spirits. Instead of laying by for the day of necessity, he is treasuring up for himself misery in this world, and wrath against the day of vengeance, in another.

You will not expect such to follow the advice of the Apostle: no; they that *lay by*, with the design recommended in the text, are another sort of persons. How different from the picture I have just set before you, is the man, who returns home in sobriety to his family, there to be received as the protector and friend of all that belong to him; congratulated by his wife, embraced by his children, and entertained after the toils of the day, with their pretty innocent conversation. He sleeps in peace, and returns again to his

work, with his wits about him; and when his contribution becomes due, he hath it in readiness, and bestows it with chearfulness. When the day of sickness comes, as it must come some time, the distress of his family is greatly alleviated; and if his health is not suddenly restored (though it is the sooner likely to be so, from the benefit to which he is intitled) his wants are fewer, and his mind is more at ease, than it could possibly be, if he had been obliged to apply in the usual way for relief from the public.

You therefore see, my Brethren, how necessary prudence, industry, and temperance are to those who undertake to lay by for the future wants of themselves and their companions. But now I must warn you, though I have recommended these virtues, not to trust in *them*, or in *yourselves*. Your trust must be in God; because your prosperity is from him only; you are directed to *lay by as God hath prospered* you. Therefore, the object of your present meeting, if you make a right use of it, leads you daily to a pious dependence upon God for his blessing: and this, as I observed above, will keep you honest in your dealings. If you take the matter in this light, and are persuaded you have succeeded

better,

better, because God hath prospered you, you must then be conscious that you have laboured honestly in your vocation; and you will go on as you have begun, in hope of farther prosperity from the same divine assistance. Thus your labour will become a work of faith; you will persevere as *seeing him that is invisible;* you will remember, that *the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good:* that the greatest prudence, without him, will turn into foolishness, and the greatest industry will be *labour in vain.* There is nothing like this sense of God's all-seeing eye, to *make* men honest, and *keep* them so. The bad man and the good differ chiefly in this respect, that the former thinks of nothing but the world, and the gain he can make of his craft by any manner of means; the other works under a continual sense of God's presence. He feels himself under a daily obligation to behave so as to ensure that prosperity, which is the gift of God; if he loses *that,* he loses his all; for he knows that wealth is but a snare to those who forget God, and think they can do as well without him as other men do with him. But if he believes, that all he has is from God, then he may apply to himself that promise

mise of the Old and New Testament, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.* In all the labours and trials of our life, may those gracious words be ever sounding in our ears—*I will never leave thee nor forsake thee!* By shewing how nigh God is to us, they will keep us nigh unto him, in the observation of his laws, the frequenting of his worship, the receiving of his sacraments, the reading of his word: and he who takes this way of qualifying himself for any society upon earth, shall be company for saints and angels in the society of heaven.

SERMON

SERMON XII.

AS TOUCHING THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD, HAVE YE NOT READ THAT WHICH WAS SPOKEN TO YOU BY GOD, SAYING,
I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB? GOD IS NOT THE GOD OF THE DEAD, BUT OF THE LIVING. MATT. XXII. 31, 32.

THE resurrection of the dead was a doctrine generally received among the Jews, and the expectation of it had supported all the faithful from the fall of Adam. That there were some in Judea who did not believe it, appears from the case before us; but these were not Jews; they were conceited philosophizing heretics, who had departed from the religion

religion of their forefathers, and were declared by our blessed Saviour to be ignorant of the scripture, and of the power of God: so their example is of no more weight against the general persuasion of the Jews, than that of our modern arians, socinians, quakers, and such like, against the faith of the gospel, and the general sense of the Christian world. 'If we listen to such people as these, our gospel has no atonement, our Saviour no divinity of person, our nature no need of the assistances of divine grace. In short, Christianity will be no Christianity, if bad men, who pretend to teach it, are allowed to be of any authority. We shall remain under the like uncertainty, if we ask Sadducees and Herodians, who had fallen into gross secularity, and were little better than our deists, what was the faith of the Jews under the law of Moses? Those of the Jews must have learned better, to whom our Saviour appealed, when he said, *Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life;* not only the promises of this world, but of the world to come. And the same must be admitted, where he asserted against the Samaritans, that *salvation*, (meaning spiritual and eternal salvation) was *of the Jews.* John v. 29. and iv. 22.

That

That the resurrection of the dead was commonly believed amongst them, appears from many examples. When our Lord told *Martha* (speaking of Lazarus) that her brother should rise again, "I know," said she "that he shall rise again *in the resurrection* at the last day." She, therefore, had no doubt about this doctrine, although not so inquisitive as *Mary* in subjects of divinity. St. *Paul*'s words are much more remarkable, as being of much greater extent and application: "For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." Now, if we refer backwards to his trial before king Agrippa, we shall see that this *hope*, which it seems was the hope *of Israel*, that is, of the church of the Jews at large, was the hope of the resurrection. "I stand, and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers; unto which promise, our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come; for which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should *raise the dead?*" This, then, was the express object of their hope: and why? not because they had learned it of one another, till it grew into a national persuasion; but because it was *promised*

mised of God unto their fathers, the Patriarchs and their posterity. Therefore, the promises made to them, however worded, and however carnally misunderstood, in ancient or modern times, were promises which included the hope of another life, and the resurrection of the dead. This agrees exactly with our Saviour's interpretation of the promise in the text. The God of life, the God of the spirits of all flesh, calls himself the God of the fathers of Israel, when they were laid in their graves; and *Moses* reported this to *shew* * *that the dead are raised:* in as much as the God of *spirits,* that is, the God of the *living* (for all spirits live) can have no relation with the dead, but as still living in spirit, and preserved unto life eternal in body also. With this text, we read that the Sadducees were put to silence, and the multitude were astonished at the doctrine. The Sadducees were impudent and obstinate; but the case was too plain to be resisted; and the promise of life was recognized by the people with wonder and delight.

I may instance, again, in that passage of Ezechiel, chap. xxxvii. where the resurrection

* See Luke xx. 37.

of dry bones into a multitude of living people, is used by the prophet, as a sign, to assure the Jews, then in captivity, that they should be restored to their own land. For this passage shews, it was a doctrine universally known to them, that the dead should be raised out of their graves. It was not written to teach them the doctrine of the resurrection at that time, but to build upon it, as a thing known and allowed amongst them. There is a plain reason in all language, why the sign should be better known than the thing signified. Here, the thing unknown to the poor desponding Jews, was their deliverance from captivity; the resurrection of the dead from their graves, is the sign and pledge to assure them thereof. The God, who, according to his promise, was engaged to bring them from the last and greatest captivity under the power of death, would bring them out of the land in which they were then held in bondage: and as they believed the one already, they might thence be induced to believe the other, when the prophet Ezechiel informed them of it, in terms borrowed from the resurrection of the body.

The *hope* of Israel was then in the promise of a *resurrection:* this was in all times the general

general persuasion of the Jews, to whom *Moses* had *shewed* it: and none but the worst of heretics disputed it, who disputed every thing. How comes it then to have been imagined, that the people of God, while under the law, looked only for *temporal promises*? The *seventh* article of our church is strongly pointed against this error; therefore it had made its appearance soon after the reformation. And, I am sorry to say it, one of our most learned divines, whose sermons are deservedly in great repute, hath affirmed in plain words, that the people, and even the priests of the Jews, did not know so much of the immortality of the soul, as the heathen philosophers did *. And another of later times built

* "As to evident discovery concerning the immortality of man's soul, or the future state (so material a point of religion, of so great moment and influence upon practice) even the Gentile theology (assisted by ancient common tradition) seems to have outgone the Jewish, grounding upon their revealed law; the Pagan priests, more expressly taught, more frequently inculcated arguments drawn from thence, than the Hebrew prophets: a plain instance and argument of the imperfection of this religion." See Dr. *Barrow's Sermons on the imperfection of the Jewish Religion.* Such a remark, from a man of such judgment and learning, and good intentions as Dr. *Barrow*, must be considered as a symp-

built a grand argument for the divine authority of Moses on the supposition, that the doctrine of a future state *is not to be found* in his writings!

Here, then, is a very strange and shocking opposition between the doctrine of Christ and his apostles, and some of our celebrated reasoners of modern times. Christ saith, Moses *shewed that the dead are raised: Paul* says, he taught nothing but what Moses taught *, and that the *resurrection of the dead* was the hope *of Israel:* while some of later times say, Moses has purposely omitted the doctrine of a future state; and that even the priests of the Jews knew little or nothing about the immortality of the soul and a future life. It is our misfortune, that for four generations past, a strange degree of inadvertence with respect to the sense of God's promises, and the language of his law, hath been stealing upon us; since the new schemes

a symptom, that we were falling into times, when the spirit of the Old Testament should be less understood than formerly: and accordingly it was strangely misrepresented by *Spencer, Warburton, Middleton,* and others: while *Stanhope,* and many writers of his class, asserted the doctrine which I am defending in this discourse.

* Acts xxvi. 12.

of *human religion* have been invented, and have found so many admirers. I have therefore determined to examine the scripture by the light of the scripture, and see what it delivers to us on the immortality of the soul, the world of spirits, the resurrection of the dead, and the rewards of the faithful after death.

Our best method will be to suppose the negative; that the immortality of the soul, and the world of spirits, and a reward after death, were *not taught* in the *law of Moſes*, and then to compare this with the scripture.

Is it not then very strange, to say, that the immortality of the soul is not taught in the law of Moses, when the Bible begins with it? what was the tree of *life* in Paradise? It was not the tree of *natural* life; for this man had already; and every other tree in the garden would support it; therefore it was the tree of *spiritual* life; that is, of a sort of life which admits of no death: and when man was debarred from the use of it, the reason given is, lest he should take of it and *live for ever*. What is it to *live for ever?* it is to be *immortal:* therefore, the immortality of the soul is one of the first doctrines of the scripture. What did man gain by eating the forbidden fruit!

fruit! *Mortality.* What then did he lose? *Immortality.* Therefore it is the doctrine of Moses that man was intended for immortality; and that his mortality was an accident, occasioned by the entrance of sin. The word *life*, in many places of the law, can mean nothing but eternal life. What else can it signify, when it is applied to God? "as I *live*, saith the Lord"—And when it is told the people by Moses that God is their *life*, and the *length* of their *days*, (Deut. xxx. 20.) nothing can be understood but a divine life, no days but the days of eternity: as when it is said, that Christ is *our life* (in the other Testament) it means, according to his own sense, *I am the resurrection and the life*—and again, *because I live, ye shall live also.* The reason of the thing is the same in both Testaments, for the *life* of God must be eternal; and there is to mortal man, whose life here is a shadow, no *length of days* but by the *resurrection from the dead.*

Let us next suppose, that the Jews under the law had no knowledge of another invisible world of spirits. How could this possibly be, when people, in the times described in the historical part of the law, had a nearer intercourse with heaven than we have now? God

himself, the head and father of the world of spirits, was visibly known to *Adam*, to *Abraham*, to *Moses*. The host of angels, the inhabitants of the invisible world, were personally revealed to the Holy Patriarchs. We read (*Gen.* xxxii.) that Jacob went on his way, and *the angels of God met him:* and when Jacob saw them, he said, this is *God's host:* and he called the name of that place *Mahanaim:* which means the *encampment of an army*, on account of their number. Before this, a visionary ladder was shewn to the same Patriarch, on which angels ascended and descended, to signify that there is a communication between heaven and earth. This was the immediate sense of the vision; and must have been inferred from it: but its full accomplishment is in the Person of the Son of God, the *living way*, on whom hereafter the angels of God will be seen ascending and descending, as in Jacob's vision.

That there is in this world of spirits an evil being, the enemy of God and man, is taught in the history of the fall; and the name of a *serpent* is given to him; a name much more instructive than that of the *devil* or *satan;* because the name of a serpent gives us his whole *character* at once. That the serpent

serpent was not a real, but a figurative one, is evident from his having the gift of speech; as from his argument, it appears, that he was a *lyar;* and from his act, that he was *a murderer from the beginning.*

Let us next suppose, that the rewards of faith and obedience, promised in the law of Moses, were merely temporal; that is, an enjoyment of good things in the land of Canaan. If this was the sense of God's promises, then they were false to Abraham, to whom they were first made: for he never received the promises in that sense. St. Stephen (*Acts* vii. 5.) urges the Jews with this case, in answer to their own blind worldly wisdom, which had totally mistaken the meaning of their law. We ought never to conclude what the law *taught*, from what some disaffected people *learned* from it: for when the affections are wrong, the understanding is never right. "God," saith St. *Stephen*, speaking of Abraham, "gave him none inheritance in it; no, not so much as to set his foot on; yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession." What follows then, but that the earthly Canaan was not the thing meant in the promise, but only a figure of the thing? and so St. *Paul* assures

us in his epistle to the *Hebrews;* telling us, that they who had received this promise, did not look upon Canaan as the end of the promise, but still called themselves *pilgrims and strangers upon earth,* declaring that they were *seeking a country,* not an earthly one (for when they had left Canaan they shewed no desire of returning to it) but an *heavenly country,* the thing intended in the promise. The very person, to whom God promised a land to be afterwards enjoyed, had not a foot of land upon earth, except a *burying-place;* and when he was laid in that, God still calls himself his God, still in covenant with him, still related to him, the same as before, though he was now dead; and consequently, still as much engaged as ever to make good his words in their true sense, and give him the land he had promised. Go then, thou worldly Jew, or thou half-blind Christian, go to the sepulchre of thy father Abraham, and there consider, whether the promises of God in the law of Moses were *temporal only.* To him they were *spiritual only; I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward,* saith the promise in *Gen.* xv. 1; and what they were to Abraham, that they were to all his posterity; and are to us at this day; for the law, which was after,

after, could not set them aside, or render them of no effect.

The rewards of another life were also promised to the people of God, under the name of a *sabbath* or *rest*. When God's works of this world were finished, he rested. Now it was promised, that into that rest of *his*, his people, if faithful, should *enter*. *Where* could it be, but in heaven? for there God rested: *when* could it be, but after the works of man are finished; that is, after this present life; as the *rest* of God was after the *works* of God? The sabbath, or rest of the seventh day, was therefore a perpetual memorial, before and under the law, that God had so rested, and that man should rest *with him;* and it was a constant monition, to those who observed it, of an heavenly rest; as the Apostle argues more at large in the Epistle to the *Hebrews* *.

You will not wonder at this language of the law, nor find it difficult, when you see how it is copied in other parts of the scripture. In the Prophet *Jeremiah*, where *Rachel*

* This argument is drawn out in the *Lectures on the Figurative Language of the Scripture*, p. 362. § 6. Second Edition.

mourneth for the death of her children, she is comforted with a promise, that they shall *come again from the land of the enemy:* their death is expressed as a captivity; and the region of departed spirits, is the country, in which the grand, or the *last enemy*, detains his prisoners. But, saith the Lord, *there is hope in thine end*, that is, in thy *death*, that thy *children shall come again to their own border;* that is, that they shall return at the resurrection, as captives are brought back from the land of the enemy, and restored to their native country. See *Jer.* xxxi. 15, 16, 17. In the same language doth the widow of *Tekoah* plead with *David.* She takes the metaphor which arises from the occasion of Absalom's *banishment;* and argues, that though *death* is appointed to all men, yet God deviseth means, that *his banished* be not expelled from him. 2 *Sam.* xiv. 14.

Now if death and life are thus spoken of in the Prophets, under the similitude of leaving and returning to our native land; this is the land which God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; who never enjoyed the earthly Canaan, but were pilgrims and strangers upon earth. This is the land wherein dwelleth righteousness, in which shall be found the true tabernacle

nacle of God, the city of God, the new Jerusalem, where saints and angels shall dwell together. All this, as the Apostle assures us, was intended by the promise in the text. God is there called the God of those who are dead in body, because they are still alive in spirit; and having prepared for them a city, which they shall enjoy at the resurrection, he is not *ashamed to be called their God*; as he would have been, if his covenant with them had extended only to the present life. Because he gave an earthly land, and a city built by men, we think he meant nothing else; whereas these things never were more than similitudes and pledges; the one of an heavenly country, the other of *a city, whose builder and maker is God.* Of that place which is reserved for the blessed after the resurrection, we can have no conception, but from what we see upon earth; and therefore, God doth not describe it in words of its own to Jews or Christians, but gives it to both in sign and figure. Our Saviour Jesus Christ tells us, that he is gone before *to prepare a place* for us. *What* that place is, he does not say. If we would know something more of it, we must look back to his fore-runner, the Joshua or Jesus of the law, who went before the people of God, to prepare

prepare a place for them in Canaan, and settle them in possession of it. Thence we shall learn, that the place prepared for us is preferable to that we now live in, as the freedom of Canaan was preferable to the bondage of Egypt: that there are *many mansions* in the heavenly land, as Canaan was divided and laid out into many quarters, for the orderly reception of the several tribes of Israel. That as they all went up to worship at Jerusalem, so shall all the tribes of the earth, who shall be saved, assemble together to worship in the heavenly city of God. Other particulars we might gather; but this is the only way in which we can learn; and we can go no farther than this method will carry us, in understanding the promises of God. Jewish priests and prophets, even though they had taken their lesson from the philosophers of heathenism (who thought their deities delighted in good eating and drinking) could have come no nearer than they have done: for the things of another life are not to be described, as they are, in words which man can understand: it is, therefore, never attempted: *since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen —what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for*

for him. Isaiah, xiv. 4. Our present life is not a state of knowledge, but of *expectation*, on which alone the Patriarchs and friends of God subsisted so long as they were here. In the want of due conception, Jews and Christians are all upon a level: all the information they can receive is conveyed under the words, *life, rest, a promised land, redemption from enemies, a city of God, new heavens and new earth*, and such-like signatures of visible things; for which reason the doctrine of the prophet is taken up and reasserted by the Apostle. See 1 *Cor.* iii. 9.

I might add other things, if the time would permit, on the character of *Enoch* and *Elijah*, and the idea given of *death* to the priests, and rulers, and kings of ancient times. A state of life after death could never be unknown to those, who knew that *Enoch* was actually taken into it. His character was handed down to the times of the Gospel, as that of an evangelical prophet, who warned the people of the old world of a judgment to come—*Behold the Lord cometh*, &c. See *Jude* ver. 14.—*Elijah* went up alive into heaven; whence it was known to all those who knew the fact, that men may live in heaven: and so, the Jews must of necessity have learned from

from the rapture of Elijah, what we learn from the ascension of Christ; though of heaven itself we know nothing but from the sky which we behold with our eyes. When it is said of the saints of old, that they *slept* with their fathers, what could be meant, but that they should *awake*; as it is actually applied in the prophet Daniel, chap. xii. 2. *Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame, and everlasting contempt.* So when it is said of Moses and Aaron, that they should *be gathered to their fathers*, it is therein affirmed, that their fathers were still alive: which sense is so obvious, that I find it insisted upon even by Jewish commentators.

From what has been said, I hope you will see farther than some learned men have done into the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting, as they were promised under the law of Moses; to shew us which, against the blindness and perverseness of the Sadducees, was the design of our blessed Saviour in the text.

It may be proper now to clear up a difficulty or two, and make some reflections to render this subject of *moral* use to us.

It

It has been insisted upon, that temporal blessings in the land of Canaan were plainly promised to the people under the law of Moses; and thence it has been argued, that these were the *only* sanctions of the law, the *only rewards* of obedience. But this doth by no means follow: because *godliness*, under the gospel, hath the promise both of *this life*, and of *that which is to come;* and it is still the effect of *righteousness* to exalt every *nation*. The present blessings of this life do not exclude the blessings of the other, neither can a *nation* be blessed, *as such*, but in the present life. The promises of God are very nearly alike under both Testaments. We Christians have a promise, that, even here, our obedience shall be rewarded with *houses and lands:* but lest we should forget what is to come, the enjoyment of these things is tempered with *persecutions:* Mark x. 30. even as God, for the correcting and spiritualizing the minds of those who were under the law, preserved wicked heathens, for thorns in their sides, and terrors upon their borders. The Holy Patriarchs never enjoyed the blessings promised in their literal sense: to them, therefore, as to us, they were no more than signs of better things: and under every age of

of the Mosaic dispensation, they who entered by faith into the ways of God, and the language of his law, voluntarily renounced, like the family of the *Rechabites*, the enjoyments of this world, and made themselves pilgrims and sojourners upon earth, such as the best of their fathers had been before, and as all good men were to be after.

It has been objected farther against the doctrine of immortality in the Old Testament, that life and immortality were *brought to light by the gospel*. But, if by *bringing to light* we understand the revealing of what was *not known before*, the expression is not true; because the resurrection of the dead was certainly known to the Jews before the gospel; and the greater part of them in our Saviour's time never thought of disputing it. Therefore, when it is said, that immortality (the word is *incorruption*, and means the incorruption of the body) was *brought to light*, the sense is, that not the *doctrine*, but the *thing itself* was brought to light, by the *fact* of our Saviour's *resurrection*, and the actual *abolition* of the power of *death*. It might, indeed, be said, with respect to all mankind, that the thing was then brought to light: but, if it is understood of the doctrine, that can be applied

plied only to the Gentiles, who had no knowledge of the resurrection; and the wisest of them mocked as soon as they heard of it. Therefore take it either way, and there will be no objection from this text against the doctrine of the resurrection in the Old Testament.

But it is objected farther, that if this doctrine is revealed in the law and the prophets, it is in a way so faint and obscure, as if it were intended that the Jews should not learn it. This merits consideration: however, if the Jews did *learn* it, and *receive* it, as they undoubtedly did, then there must be *in us* some misunderstanding of the case. Accordingly we shall find, and must allow, that there is an obscurity in the law, arising partly from design in God the lawgiver, and partly from ignorance in man. When we read the historical, prophetical, or ceremonial part of the law, we see the wisdom of God there delivering itself in parables; and for the same reasons as our Saviour did afterwards; covering up the precious doctrines of life under a veil: which method, while it rendered them still more precious to the wise, who could see and understand, secured them from profane heathens

heathens and carnal Jews. They could not despise them, for they could not see them *.

The life and spirit of the signs and figures in the Christian mysteries are now as effectually lost to our Deists, Socinians, and other like disputers of this world. They who do see through this method, which God hath constantly observed from the beginning of the world, from the *tree* in Paradise, to the *lamb* of the Passover, and from thence to the *bread* of the Christian sacrament, see the better for it; while those, who have not an heart to understand, are blinded, and confirmed in their unbelief. Not only the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the dead, are doctrines of the law lost to a carnal mind, but all other great doctrines are lost in like manner: the corruption of man's nature, the bondage of sin, purification of the heart by

* The sense I have here fallen upon, coincides so exactly with the words of a *Jewish* writer, that I shall set them down for the Reader to reflect upon. "Servans *reconditam*, et relinquens doctis et sapientibus *eruendam*, ex variis legis locis, illam *futuram beatitudinem*. Atque hæc eadem causa est, cur nulla *mentio aperta* fiat in Genesi; sub *metaphora* tantùm proponatur." *Menasseh Ben Israel*, de Resur. Mort. lib. 1. cap. 13.

grace

grace, atonement by the shedding of blood, the true character of the Messiah, the calling of the Gentile world, were none of them to be found in the law, according to the sense of the carnal Jew; neither are they now seen by the disputing Christian. Therefore let us all endeavour to put off this Jewish spirit, and pray in the words of the Psalmist, who understood all these things, *open thou mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of thy law!* The letter of the law is the shadow of truth, and nothing more. Of this some have been ignorant, while the world allowed them the reputation of great learning; and this ignorance produced the monstrous propoſition published amongst us of late years, that a revelation came to man from the living God, without life in it: which is so far from being an improvement in literature, or divinity, that it must be shocking to the ears of intelligent Christians; and, being false and heretical, stands condemned in the Articles of the Church of England.

But now, lastly, give me leave to tell you, that the *moral* doctrine to be drawn from the words of the text, is a matter of great consideration: and I desire you will lay it up in your minds. God calls himself *the God of*

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: this is the title he has chosen; his favourite *memorial to all generations:* but in this title he declares his relation to his friends and servants when they are *dead.* He is our support in life; and that is a blessing and an honour to us; but he delights rather to consider himself as our *life in death*; and as such we ought to consider him daily. We are all solicitous to raise ourselves in the eyes of our neighbours, and to be reckoned among the higher orders of the living: whereas it should be our chief care to consider, with whom we shall be numbered when we are dead. Let, then, the vain and the ambitious be striving to be in the class of the mighty, the wealthy, and the honourable of this world, while they live: but let us rather provide, that we may be numbered with *Abraham, Isaac,* and *Jacob,* when we are dead. Then will God be with us when we are no longer with men; and we shall rest in the hope, that he will soon fulfil the promises made to the Holy Patriarchs, our spiritual forefathers, by raising us from the dead, and giving us a place in the heavenly city, which he hath prepared for them and for us, *that they without us, should not be made perfect.*

SERMON

SERMON XIII.

AND WHEN HE HAD SPENT ALL, HE BEGAN TO BE IN WANT. LUKE XV. 14.

THE words describe the miserable situation of a young man, who might have lived in his father's house, where there was plenty of all things for those who were wise enough to enjoy it.

But the love of liberty, and novelty, arose in the mind of this unfortunate youth. A restless curiosity was in his temper, and pleasure was his object: not the pleasure of the wise, but of the foolish; not that which God allows for our comfort, but that which the tempter throws in our way to ruin us. So he left his father's house, and went afar off, to be his own master, and take his pleasure, where

no authority would reprove him, no counsel direct him, but that of himself and his wicked companions.

For awhile, he went on as he pleased: but at length, the evil consequences which he had kept out of his mind, fell upon his affairs: *he had spent all,* and *began to be in want.* He, who is without prudence, will, by degrees, be without money: and he, who hath spent all, must suffer many inconveniences; of which this is one; that having learned no useful employment, he will be driven to miserable and base expedients to keep himself from starving: as this poor young man, in his distress, submitted to be sent into the field to feed swine, without being allowed the liberty of partaking with them.

The parable supposes this poor sinner to have recovered his senses, and to have returned: but, alas! how many are there, who go off and never return! whose ruined affairs can never be repaired! who have no father to receive and restore them; but are left to do as they can, and be lost in the misery they have brought upon themselves.

I mean to use this example of the gospel, for the purpose of warning my hearers, especially some of the younger part of them, of

of the causes and miseries of extravagance, and of recommending the wisdom and virtue of œconomy, as absolutely necessary to make them happy.

When you enquire into the sources of extravagance, you may imagine that extravagance is owing to an extravagant temper. But extravagance is not the cause of itself: A man will no more throw away his fortune, than he will throw away his victuals, till some infirmity or folly has got possession of his mind. Every act, good or bad, is the result of some counsel, either from a man's judgment, or his imagination, leading his judgment astray. If his idea of things is false or partial, his actions will accord with it: unaccountable, perhaps, to reason and wisdom, but suitable to his conceptions. Allow a madman his principles, and then you will no longer wonder at his actions. Thus it is in the case of an extravagant person. He has conceived a false idea of things, and persuaded himself, either that we are sent into the world for nothing but to seize the present moment, and take our pleasure, or that his actions will not be attended with such consequences as other men's are; or that consequences, which are distant, are not to be weighed against grati-

fication which is present. Extravagance, therefore, in all cases, is to be considered as an effect which hath its causes: and these I find to be,

1. *Intemperance.* If a man is hungry, he may feed cheaply; but if he is nice, he cannot live but at a great expence. And here we are also to consider, that besides the extravagant charge of high eating and drinking, excess of every kind has a bad effect upon the understanding, and brings upon the mind a sottishness, which is always improvident. As the drunkard loses the direction of his feet, an intemperate man is very apt to lose the direction of his fortune, and run headlong into many other foolish and hurtful expences. Fulness breeds sleepiness and indolence; and while extravagance is carrying every thing out, idleness brings nothing in; so that an intemperate man is between two fires; he has ruin before him and behind him; and if his livelihood depends on his attention to business, he very soon falls into distress. And the case is not much better with the man of fortune; whose inattention and indolence will have the same baneful effect upon his affairs, though his ruin may not come on so rapidly. Two evil principles are working upon him at once;

once: the same passions, which make him wanton and expensive, render him also inattentive and careless; and so his affairs, instead of being inspected by himself, are left to others, who are secretly making a property of him; feeding and enriching themselves, and their friends, without his knowledge. While his visible expences are great, and he gathers his fruits too fast with his own hand before they are ripe; there is an invisible worm working at the root, which brings on unexpected, and seemingly unaccountable but certain decay. It is, therefore, a very unfortunate circumstance, when any gentleman, or lady, through a fault in their temper, or a defect in their education, think themselves too great to be personally acquainted with the state of all their domestic concerns: a privilege to which nobody is born but the ideot.

2. A second cause of extravagance is a vain desire of shew and appearance. Persons who do not seek true happiness within themselves, derive an imaginary happiness from the opinion, or what they think to be the opinion, of other people. They suppose it impossible for them to be happy, unless they seem so: therefore they purchase this vision-

ary happiness at an extravagant rate. No man or woman can say how far this fancy will carry them, or where it will end: for perhaps it will never be satisfied so long as a single competitor is left. It is too common in this age, for those who are less, to take their pattern from those who are greater. God made them to be rich; but they find a way of making themselves poor, by living after a fashion which is above their condition. Hence it is a just observation, and has been frequently made by those who know the world, that some of the poorest families in this kingdom are those of middle fortunes who affect the style of the nobility. For, what is poverty? It is *want:* and he, who is in want, is poor, whatever may be the value of his estate. He suffers the distress of poverty, with those additional evils of vexation and mortification, unknown to persons of humble life. Artificial appetites are observed to domineer more than the natural; and it is equally true, that artificial poverty is more pressing and more distressing than that poverty to which we are born. It ought in justice to be so; because the one is innocent and the other sinful. Therefore, let not the poor repine, as if they were the only poor: many of their betters, who

who make a great shew in the world, are in the same condition with themselves, or a worse. Suppose a man of reasonable size should resolve to add even one inch more to his stature. This small addition he cannot preserve but by being constantly upon the rack, and submitting to be in an agony, that he may appear greater than he is. What is worst of all to themselves, when they come to the knowledge of it, such people find they have made themselves contemptible to their superiors, and ridiculous to their equals. In his sphere, every man may be respectable; but no man can be so out of it; because he cannot get thither without having first made himself a fool. So great is this species of folly, that in many instances it approaches near to madness. I remember an example of a gentleman, who was a wit in other respects, but so desirous of appearing great and splendid above himself, that he had laid out large sums in beautifying a seat which did not belong to him; and he was shewing a friend what waters and plantations he had added, and how much farther he intended to carry his improvements; while the officers of justice were then actually in the house, to apprehend him as a debtor.

Ad-

Admirable is the sentence of the son of Sirach, on the abortive plans of extravagant people: *he that buildeth an house with other men's money,* that is, by running into debt, *is like one who gathereth stones for the tomb of his burial.* Ecclus. xxi. 8. The edifice raised on such terms, stands as a monument of the builder's œconomical death. Thus did the vanity of Absalom raise a pillar, to be a grand memorial of himself: not thinking that an ignominious death should lay him under a rude heap of stones, a monument more suitable to his character and actions.

3. A third cause, by which many fortunes are dissipated, and the owners brought to beggary, is a passion for gaming. The employment, as an employment, is below a rational creature, and not well consistent with honesty, under the best acceptation of it. For, whence doth the gamester seek his happiness? From the hope of depriving others of their property, without giving them any thing in lieu, but chance; which is but a shadow, and to the loser is departed as such. Unless gaming is for a large stake, the passions of the avaricious are not sufficiently interested to make it an entertaiment: and if it is, then gaming is equivalent to duelling, and is to be condemned

on

on the same principle. The gamester does that for covetousness, which the duellist doth for revenge. The one stakes that life wantonly, which is the property of God, and due to his country: the other stakes that property which should maintain his family and pay his debts; and this, being a wicked act, is generally attended with ruinous consequences. Who are the persons that profess gaming? the profligate, who are either too proud or too idle to work. In low life, they are sharpers and cheats; the hawks and vultures of civil society, who are upon the watch to tear and scatter the plumage of the simple. And, it is to be feared, they are often not much better in higher life. Woe be to those who love their company, and fall under their rapacity; for this vice is not like some others which consume by slow degrees: it is not like blighting winds, overflowing rains, or burning droughts, bringing scarcity in their rear: but like an earthquake, which swallows up houses and lands with instantaneous ruin. The love of play generally takes place, where bodily labour, or thoughtfulness of mind, is wanting: it is the business of those who have no business; it is a spirit which rushes like wind into a vacuum.

4. A fourth cause, which drains many of their wealth, is that vain curiosity which is always wanting something, always seeking after novelty or rarity. It is weary of the last toy, and must buy a new one; not considering that this must soon be succeeded by another, and that by another: because none of them are sought for their real, but for their fancied, worth; and when fancy tires (which, being weak, it is very apt to do) they lose their value. Vain curiosity is an insatiable principle, because its objects are such as give no real satisfaction. It is analogous to that infirmity of the stomach, which covets and swallows every thing and digests nothing *(revomuntur cibi)* but is still empty, with all its feeding. It is the curse of some people that they are tormented with imaginary wants, till there is no supply left for such as are natural: the lean and hungry kine, never to be fattened or satisfied, eat up all those of better condition. This humour of wanting every thing for its novelty, and the ruin it brings with it, was censured by one of the Latins, with an equivocation, in which the wit is very just and severe—*You buy every thing*, says he, *therefore, you will sell every thing:* and the world has frequent opportunities of seeing how often, and how

how soon, this taste for buying is followed by the necessity of selling. Sales are daily published, in which the superfluous articles, heaped together by ruined people, are dispersed abroad, and pass into the hands of others, who attend with a curiosity, which either knows nothing, or feels nothing, of the unhappy state of those who are thus stripped of their effects.

The case would not be nearly so bad, if the spirit of profuseness preyed only upon itself: but so many industrious families are hurt, many relations and dependents injured in their just expectations, who happen to lie within the vortex of an extravagant man, that there ought surely to be some legal restraint on those who are apparently (as privileged swindlers) undermining and plundering others, while they are ruining themselves. There is a kingdom of Europe, where, if it can be shewn by the relations or parties concerned, that a man has sunk one-third of his capital or his estate, complaint may be made, and the attorney-general, after due inquest, appoints guardians, as if he were a minor, for the management of what remains: and thus his ruin, with the consequences of it to others, is prevented by the timely interposition of authority.

thority. Under such an establishment, I apprehend, there can be no such thing as gaming.

5. The two remaining causes of extravagance are, the love of fame, and the love of pleasure. Pride works more or less in all mankind: but as it shews itself in a desire of popularity, it was very prevalent among the heathens of Greece and Rome; who were lavish of their gifts to the populace, to obtain their interest or their applause. Pride is never so mean, as when it looks beneath itself, and pays its court to those over whom it wants to rule. It appeals, for its own merit, to those who have no judgment; and yet blinds their eyes with a gift, before it ventures to take their opinion. Popular interest is become a public commodity, for which there are so many candidates and competitors, that it is frequently purchased at an exorbitant rate, and brings the possessor to poverty. I do not mean to extend my observations to particulars; but shall only observe, that it is a sign the times are degenerate, and that Christians are become too much like heathens, when opinions are bought and sold like provisions in a market, and the minds of the people, which

which should be pure and uncorrupt, are given up to prostitution.

As to pleasure, little need be said to prove the ill effects it hath upon a man's circumstances. With wise men, it hath always had the character of an harlot, as well for its extravagance and expensiveness, as for its deceit and wickedness. When pleasure is become the grand object, the mind grows so weak and effeminate, that all resolution is lost, and it must have what it demands. If, in its pride and wantonness, it requires pearls of inestimable value, to dissolve and swallow them at a draught, as Cleopatra did, they must not be refused. Here the prodigal of the text returns upon us, whose substance was *wasted with riotous living;* that is, in the enjoyment of expensive revellings in the worst of company; and there is none worse than harlots, who are next in order to the gaming table, for bringing the unwary into speedy ruin. They are therefore stigmatized in the parable as devourers: *this thy son,* said the elder brother, *hath devoured thy living with harlots.*

Having thus far enquired into the causes of prodigality, which I believe are in general such as have been here described; we are now to consider its effects. These are, loss of comfort,

fort, loss of honour, of liberty, of honesty, perhaps of life itself, and (which is worst of all) of the grace of God.

And first, the extravagant man forfeits the comfort of his life; while his substance is wasting, he may for a time be insensible of his danger; like a patient in a consumption, who flatters himself he may do well, though others see and lament that he is daily dropping into his grave: but when he has *spent all,* which he who spends without consideration will soon do, then poverty, which had concealed itself under his table, rises up as an armed man, to assault and terrify him: and it is impossible for him to enjoy any comfort with such a companion at his side. The burthen of debt is so much like the burthen of sin, that the one is often put for the other. It is as unpleasant to a man of sensibility to walk with this load upon his mind, as to travel barefooted through bad ways with a load upon his shoulders, which he cannot shake off; and remorse gnaweth upon him, when he reflects that he hath made it for himself.

In the next place, he loses the repute and honour of his character in the eyes of the world: for what can be more contemptible than a man who was great, but has made himself

himself little; who was rich, but has made himself poor; not in assisting others, but in abusing and undermining himself!

The loss of liberty is another unhappy effect of extravagance. It brings on debt; and hopeless debt leads to hopeless confinement. Misfortunes, imputable to the secret influence of Providence, or which arise from want of judgment, in respect of which some men differ much from others, have a claim upon the benevolent for their favour, and will always find it: but if we were to review the company in some prisons, and enquire into their past conduct, we should find amongst them the vain and inconsiderate, who flourished away in a character which did not belong to them, and, like the flies of a day, which dance about in the air, took their pleasure in a little false sunshine of their own making, to bring a cloud of misery and infamy upon the rest of their lives; and whose pride and indiscretion, though they were extricated, would soon involve them in their former difficulties.

Extravagance hath in many cases a worse effect than I have yet mentioned: it tempts men of good hearts to actions which cannot be justified. The best of prodigals are in a dangerous situation; necessity drives them

upon mean and base expedients, for the satisfying of present wants; such as they would never have thought of, if their circumstances had been unembarrassed, and their judgment free. This is reported to have been the case with that renowned and otherwise great and good man, the Lord Chancellor *Bacon.* In such a situation, men who are no profligates are tempted to make encroachments upon their conscience; which, having yielded to one dishonourable action, grows more insensible to those that follow: and when the case becomes desperate, their actions are desperate. When a man is sinking he catches at a twig; and if it has thorns upon it, he must lay hold of it in the moment of distress; though his hand is pierced through by the shift he is making to uphold himself and save his life.

As for the worst of prodigals, who die by the hand of justice, they are not properly holden within our consideration. Many of them can waste nothing of their own, for they have nothing; and the profusion, of which thieves are so universally guilty, arises, as their theft doth, from the prevailing of ruinous vices; such as idleness, intemperance, the love of ill company; all under the influence

ence of ignorance and ill principle. And it is incredible, how much persons of this character will run through in a short time. One of them, who was executed of late, declared, that between the months of October and April, he had seen the end of eight hundred pounds. But there are prodigals of an higher class, who do not lose their lives by the hand of justice, but, what is worse, by the hand of despair. The history of all past times informs us, how common it hath been, and many miserable examples, of the present day, shew how common it is, for a spendthrift to throw away his life, when he hath nothing else left. The disappointed avarice of the gamester rages with impatience; and pride, brought to beggary, sinks with dejection: and neither of these having any support from the sources of religion, there is neither comfort in the present, nor hope of the future; so, to their distracted imagination there seems to be no refuge for them, but in that black and dark gulf, to the brink of which their steps have been carrying them through the mazes of a mistaken life.

This leads me to observe, farther, that prodigality, while it throws away that property which is temporal, is also forfeiting the grace

of God and the better riches of eternity. This, being the worst, is the only ill effect of wastefulness insisted upon by our blessed Saviour in his parable of the Unjust Steward: *If ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?* that is, if ye have wasted the riches of this world which were committed to you, how can you expect to be trusted with the gifts of faith, and the talents of divine grace? concerning which, we learn farther, that man has no other possession properly so called: for our Lord hath added, as equivalent to what he had said before, but differently expressed for our better instruction, *if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who shall give you that which is your own?* As the managers of this world's wealth, we are not proprietors but stewards, holding in trust for the great proprietor of all, to whom we are accountable: therefore, the *unrighteous mammon* is not our own but another's; and we must leave all such possessions behind us at our death: but the grace of God, the *true riches,* when given, will abide with us in life, and pass with us through death into the land of righteousness, from whence they came. These, therefore, when we have them, may be

called *our own*; for they never leave us, and no man can take them away: but he who is found unfit to be trusted with what is of less value, shall not have these committed to him, to be abused and wasted. And it is surely to be apprehended, that much of the grace of God is seldom committed to a man who is loose and wasteful in the conduct of his life. He is without that consideration, that seriousness, that purity, that justice, which are necessary to the character of a religious man who is a candidate for heaven, and keeps up an acquaintance with God.

SERMON XIV.

PART II.

AND, WHEN HE HAD SPENT ALL, HE BEGAN TO BE IN WANT. LUKE XV. 14.

WHEN the case of the prodigal is considered, we owe it as a debt due to the folly of mankind, to shew them the sins and miseries of extravagance: but we owe it also as a debt to their understanding and good sense, to convince them of the duty and wisdom of œconomy. Some may think it sufficient to say, that the way not to be profuse, is to be saving; and that the spirit of parsimony is the only certain cure for the spirit of prodigality. But this remedy, so as it prevails

vails in some constitutions, may prove as bad as the disease. The œconomy of a wise man and a Christian doth not consist in the saving, but in the prudent and charitable disposal of his substance: not exclusive of a sparing principle, when that becomes necessary to his affairs.

The ingredients which properly constitute what we call œconomy, are *providence, prudence,* and *order* or *method.* He, who doth not observe these, will always be in danger of that dissipation which leads to ruin.

The *provident* man, according to the sense of his name, *looks forward:* he lives *to-day,* as one who considers that he is to live *to-morrow:* whereas the fool, looking to the present day only, saith, *let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.* When he undertaketh any work, he first revolves in his mind, how it is to be conducted, and when it will be finished. It may be such, perhaps, as any body can *begin.* Any man can leap into the stream; but he who does this, without considering how he shall swim across, is very much to be blamed; especially if he hath been first admonished of the depth. A person, who miscarries for want of timely consideration, makes himself the talk of his neighbours. Want of foresight is

want of wisdom; and want of wisdom, when it affects any thing great, is always in danger of being ridiculous. This case is strongly represented by our Lord in the gospel: *which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he hath sufficient to finish it? lest haply after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all that behold it begin to mock him.* No man can be allowed to have sense, who hath sense of the present, with no sense of the future. The laughter, which is not restrained by thought, is mad; and the mirth, not tempered by a consideration of what is to come, is frantic. Improvidence is against nature; at least, it is against what we call nature in brutes; because it is against the principle of self-preservation; of which principle he seems to be destitute, who considereth not what is to become of him, when the day of present gratification is over. Therefore every man, who would live in the world, must consider what his station and circumstances will admit of; leaving as little as possible to probabilities and contingences, which are very apt to fill the minds of the indolent, and to produce many abortive expectations.

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The catechism of the church of England teaches us, while we are children, that there is a certain state of life to which God by our birth or education is pleased to call us: we are to lay down a plan of living suitable to that state, and then we may be able to support it for the time to come. Even in our recreations, it is wise to provide a reserve, and keep up a future relish for them; lest they become insipid, and consign us over to remorse and melancholy. But, there are young people, headstrong and inconsiderate, with no experience of human life, and fascinated with ideas of self-indulgence, who enter upon the world, as if they meant to tear up pleasure by the roots, that it may never bear any fruit to them afterwards: and so their pleasures either end in untimely death, or leave them nothing but bitter herbs to feed upon for the rest of their life. Whereas, a little timely foresight, with regard to common sense as well as to virtue, would preserve to them all that can be enjoyed with wisdom and innocence: and nothing else, which this world hath to give, will be worth their seeking.

The second ingredient, in good œconomy, is *prudence.* The use of this virtue is to distinguish between good and evil, between causes

causes and effects, between appearances and realities: and in consequence of a proper discrimination of things and persons, to choose the good, and avoid the evil. Prudence examines all things, rather in their consequences, than in themselves: it judges of things, as the gospel teaches us to judge of men, by *their fruits.* Many actions of mankind are of a doubtful nature; partly good and partly bad: good under some circumstances, and as bad under others: good in appearance, bad in effect: well esteemed in the sight of man, but of no account, or even odious and abominable in the sight of God. The world hath virtues of its own manufacture, very expensive, and highly praised, and yet good for little at the bottom. When Satan has the vending of such equivocal virtues, he turns their white side uppermost: and men learn of him, to deceive one another by the like artifice. They praise some good thing, for the sake of some evil thing which is attached to it; or magnify one side of a man's character, which is good, or at least specious, to recommend the other which is bad. How agreeable it is to hear, that a man may be a libertine, and yet pass for a man of virtue! Such deceptions as these may have a very

a very fatal effect upon our œconomy. We are captivated and flattered with fine ideas of liberality, generosity, hospitality, benevolence, and charity; which are indeed most excellent things, when they are found in the wise and prudent; but when they are affected by the vain or the inconsiderate, they change their nature, and become sometimes ridiculous, often mischievous, always dangerous. Real virtue will be sure to advance us sooner or later: spurious virtue may bring us to ruin, as it hath already brought many, whose profuseness, while upon its progress, did very little good to their neighbours or their country.

Prudence, therefore, is always to distinguish. It will teach us, that no man can be generous in his gifts, till he is just in his payments. It is no better than a specious fraud, to convert that into a gift, which is due elsewhere as a debt: to purchase the character of benevolence, by feeding one man with the bread of another: or, perhaps, by sending one man to gaol, for want of that money which buys another man out of it. Sometimes it is a much greater kindness to prevent evil by timely and friendly admonition, than to cure it afterwards (perhaps very imperfectly)

fectly) by giving money. It is a good thing to shew mercy to felons and debtors, in a prison: but it would be a much better thing to keep them out of it, by teaching them the happiness of sobriety and moderation, or restraining their excesses by a seasonable execution of the laws. It is good to relieve the poor; but the passion of feeding vagrants, encouraging idleness, or promoting debauchery, is so weak and unserviceable, that we may be called to an account for such kindness in the day of judgment. And here I must observe, moreover, that all fictitious virtue, being the child of vanity, is apt to raise an enthusiastic affection; and being chiefly resident in weak minds, who do not make proper distinctions, it has been found to eat deeper into men's fortunes, than the most heroic charity. Prudence, therefore, must save us from being cheated by specious but false virtues; to the power of which many noble and unsuspecting minds are exposed. Before we admit, we must prove them; as the wary prove their money, before they put it into their purse, by applying it to some touchstone: and there is none better than this of prudence.

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To providence and prudence, we must add, above all things, *order* and *method*, for the regulating of our daily affairs. Persons of high spirits, and volatile dispositions, look down upon order, as a low thing, fit only for dull people. But, no man's life can be either useful or pleasant, who does not live by rule in the disposing of his time. We all see the absolute necessity of order, in the marshalling, leading, and governing an army; in transacting the business of a kingdom; in regulating the company of a ship, and carrying on the practice of navigation; without order and discipline, these things cannot be done: every man must have his post, and his work, and his time. And the reason is the same in common life: for every family is a lesser kingdom; life is a voyage, and a warfare; in which the undisciplined must expect to suffer the inconveniences of confusion and anarchy. Such is the dignity, propriety, benefit, and beauty of order, that it is from God himself, and shines throughout the whole world which he hath made. The sun rises every morning at his time; light and darkness succeed regularly, for labour and for rest; the stars perform their courses with unerring certainty; the tides ebb and flow at their hour; there is a season

a season for every change, and every change is in its season. Even brute creatures all follow their instinct in an orderly manner. Those that are made for pasture spread themselves over the hills with the rising of the sun; while those which are made for prey are then retiring to their dens. The stork in the firmament knoweth her appointed time; the turtle, the crane, and the swallow observe their seasons; the bees, the ants, are examples of the most exact order and œconomy. The heavens above, the earth below, the seasons and the tides, beasts, birds, and insects, all instruct us, that we are to live by rule, and be exact in allotting our time to the several works and functions of life. And let me tell all those who have such an opinion of the brightness of their parts, and depend so upon the agility of their minds as to think they are above rules, that they are the persons, who stand most in need of them; to reduce their motions to some meaning, and oblige them to a certain time, in doing those things, which otherwise their wandering heads would never do at all. Fluid mercury is very bright, and wonderfully active; but we can make no vessel out of it for the service of a family. For all such purposes, the solid metal is better,

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as well as more valuable in itself. Yet good wits may be regular, without any impeachment of their sufficiency. Our great *Alfred* was a man of wit, learning, magnanimity and accomplishment; but, from his wisdom and piety, such was his self-government, that no man ever lived by more exact rules, or did more business by the force of them. We have seen another character of modern times; not an *Alfred*, but very great as a man of parts, and a prince, and a general; who made his time of incredible value, and did wonderful things, by the observation of an exact method in the œconomical application of his hours. It may be difficult at first to live by rule: all restraint bears hard upon the wildness of nature, like a bit in the mouth; but habit makes it pleasant, and they who have tried it find so much use in it, that they can never willingly depart from it; such is the facility with which it enables us to conduct our affairs; such the readiness with which we transact business, and pass through all the concerns of life. It renders our time of much greater effect and value: a regular man will do more business in one day, and with less trouble, than another will in two. Kings are not ashamed of regularity: the

want

want of it is the mark of a vulgar education, or a weak understanding, or an irreligious and vicious disposition. Where regularity prevails, the cottage becomes respectable; and without it, the palace itself is mean, unpleasant, and contemptible. Solomon, who is celebrated as the wisest man upon earth, was also the greatest and the most splendid, from the singular order of his kingdom, and the exact œconomy of his household. This produced such an appearance of prosperity and happiness, and was judged to be the result of so much wisdom, that the queen of Sheba was beyond measure astonished at the sight—*Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom.* Where the greatest wisdom was, there was found also the greatest order; and with it the greatest dignity and splendor. Yea, and our blessed Lord himself, a greater than Solomon, with the business of heaven always before him, was yet never regardless of order and œconomy upon earth. He was exact in observing days and hours, times, places and persons, set apart for the services of the church. When he fed five thousand people at once, there was no tumult, no interruption, in so great a company. They were

were all exactly divided into parties of a certain number: what was to be distributed amongst them, was given first to the disciples, and from them to the multitude: and when they were all fed, the fragments were carefully gathered up, that nothing might be lost or wasted. This was done by him, who could so easily supply all defects, who could even create and multiply with his word, for a pattern of attention and consideration to us, in the use we make of the things of this world. After the two examples of Solomon and our blessed Saviour, I can only say, that no man should pretend to be wise, or great, or good, or happy, whose life is not conducted with order and regularity.

All the lessons of the moralist may be reduced to this short one: "vice is evil, for it makes us miserable; virtue is good, for it makes us happy." The truth of this is no where more apparent than in our present subject; when we compare together the man of extravagance, and the man of moderation. The Apostle admonishes us, to *use this world, as not abusing it.* The happiness of man depends on his attention to this distinction: for every creature of God, all the elements of the world, all the gifts and riches of his

Providence, all the senses of the body and the faculties of the mind; all are good, as they are used; all disappoint and torment us when they are abused. In this respect, beasts are in a safer way than men, being restrained by that instinctive wisdom, which hinders them from abusing what God hath given. They pass through life, without having the command of fire, or the use of gold and silver, which are so dangerous to man. They cannot burn their own stalls, nor bring themselves to beggary, by purchasing articles of luxury or vanity. From these dangers and temptations they are free: some things they cannot abuse, and they are not disposed to abuse other things; but live contented within the bounds of temperance; and their instinct is an infallible direction for their preservation. They rise when the light appears, and lie down to rest when it is departing; they eat what is natural, they decline what is hurtful, and observe such measures as secure to them the benefit of health and strength. But man is committed to his appetites, and is subject to the delusions of an imagination, in which causes and effects are falsely represented. He has no rule within him to direct him, no instinct to restrain him; and, if he is

without religion, and the checks of prudence, he lives in absurdity and uneasiness, and contradicts all the ends of his being. He goes to a fire, not to warm himself, but to be burnt; he eats, not to be nourished, but to be bloated and surfeited; he drinks, not to be refreshed, but intoxicated; he sleeps, not for rest, but for sloth and stupidity; he spends his wealth on what will destroy him, and with that unthinking profusion which turns it into poverty. In short, he abuses all the gifts of God, and all his creatures; and in so doing he turns the world upside down. This world ought to be a place of preparation for the blessedness of heaven; but he converts it into a place of disappointment and torment; as if it were intended only for an introduction to the kingdom of darkness, where man will associate with those evil spirits, who threw away the glory they possessed, and by reason of their own ill management found heaven itself insufficient to their happiness.

Physicians have a way of curing distempers, by enquiring into their causes, and counteracting them by others of a contrary effect. The method is good, and often proves effectual: I would, therefore, recommend it in the present case. We have seen

the causes of prodigality; that it arises from intemperance, affectation of appearance, gaming, love of novelty, of fame, of pleasure.

To guard against intemperance, we are to consider as Christians, that we are not sent hither for a life of pleasure, but into a world of danger, to be surrounded with enemies, and wrestle with principalities and powers, who are snatching from us the prizes of eternity. If men in contests of little peril, and for objects of little value, are *temperate in all things;* how shall we be *intemperate,* who are *striving* for the salvation of our souls?

As to the love of shew and finery, how ridiculous is all extravagance of dress, when we remember that clothing was not known, till the innocence of man, and with it his happiness, was lost: that, as sin hath brought death, all our splendid equipages must terminate in the hearse; and, that as we came naked into the world, we must go naked out of it. This is the real state of man. The pride of life throws a disguise over it for a time, which death takes off and lays aside for the moths to devour.

Gaming will be no snare to those who avoid the company of gamesters, which hath very little to recommend it. This will be most

most easy to such persons as have learned to amuse themselves more rationally than *they* do, with reading, conversing, and following such works and pursuits as are worthy of a man. Gamesters often lose all by coveting all; which danger he will be sure to escape who covets nothing, but makes himself contented with what his diligence earns or God gives.

Curiosity is another cause of ruin. It is always seeking some new object: let us chuse that which is *good*, and *hold it fast*, and we shall not want to change it. *Buy the truth*: it will not cost much; and we shall never wish to be selling it again. Great things may be had for little cost. A bible, value five shillings, is of more use, and will do us more good, and, if we understand it, give us more pleasure, than all the other books that can be bought for five thousand pounds. A Christian, from the great objects he hath before him, will not want new things like a child; and, from the humble state of his mind, will not be tempted by the pride of purchasing.

The expensive love of fame and popularity will never do any hurt, where the approbation of the wise and virtuous, and the favour of

God, is sought after. The praise which is paid for is very uncertain and deceitful, and may turn against us to-morrow. The praise of God is not to be obtained by all we can lay out; not even by selling all we have, and giving it to the poor: but by an affectionate mind, performing small and cheap things, according to our ability, on great motives.

As to *pleasure*, the last, and perhaps the most universal cause of ruin to the bodies, souls, and fortunes of men; the surest method will be to seek that pleasure which is good, and then we shall not wish to destroy ourselves by that which is evil. The body hath its pleasures, and the mind hath its pleasures: the latter only are the pleasures of a man; and many of them are so cheap, that they may be had for nothing. I told you of one, who ruined himself by beautifying a seat which did not belong to him; and you wondered at his folly: but the moral is better worth considering than the fact: for this is true of us all, when we waste our substance in forming scenes of grandeur and pleasure upon this earth; we are beautifying what does not belong to us, and must soon be left behind. There is a pride in being the owner of fine places; but the thoughtful mind may have

have great pleasure in them, without being the owner of them; and so far as God hath beautified the world, he hath done it for the common pleasure of us all: and the saint or the philosopher, who contemplates it as a scene which God hath adorned, partakes of a pleasure as sincere, perhaps, as great, but certainly more pure and lasting, than the possessor who calls himself the owner of the soil. When he sees the wood towering upon the hill or hanging over the vale, his happiness does not depend on his being able to cut down the timber in it, but in admiring its verdure and rejoicing in its shade. The garden of pleasure is planted and adorned at a great expence; but, to the botanist, the world is his garden, and God is the planter of it. I might go on to shew you, from other like instances, how the greatest pleasures are frequently enjoyed by those who spend least upon them. Vicious pleasure is a deceitful harlot, who smiles at us and ruins us; virtuous pleasure is such as Eve was in the state of innocence, and there is a paradise around her.

When we meditate on the miseries of prodigality, it is natural to turn our eyes about us, and examine how it is with us, as a

nation, in respect of our œconomy. And here we cannot but discover, that it is the error of all orders of people amongst us to live at a more expensive rate, than can consist with the prosperity of themselves, or the public. The ill effects of this are manifest and undeniable; and I see more than it may be prudent to speak of. In the rich, it produces distress within doors, and the oppression of the poor without: in the poor it produces hopeless debt, and promotes profligacy of manners. If our nobility and gentry, who form what is called the landed interest, live upon too large a scale, they must find such resources as they can. Their rents must be raised to an immoderate height; which the farmer cannot pay, unless corn is dear; and then, if any artificial scarcity should take place annually, either by connivance, or by trifling with the laws, and making a breach in the constitution of the country, that must be a very great evil: for if there is a just human right upon earth, and which ought to be religiously attended to, it is a right in the poor to have bread for their labour; and so long as they have bread cheap, we shall never hear any complaints from them: and this, I say, they ought always to have, except when

when scarcity is from the visitation of God. Why is there such a demand for money, among the rich? Is it to support two families instead of one? No; but that one family may live at the expence of two: that they may be able to lead a dissipated, unprofitable, unhealthy life; which, while it seems to benefit some individuals (among whom we shall find the most useless members of the community) hurts themselves and the public in general. Our metropolis is swollen to a monstrous size, like a body that is dropsical: and we may consider it as a scale, whereby our expensiveness, as a people, is to be measured; for its magnitude has been rendered excessive, chiefly by a change of manners, in those who have exceeded the bounds of their oeconomy.

And the poor follow the rich according to their measure. Many of them have departed from a cheap and manly diet, to admit articles of luxury, on which they live worse for more money. The terms they are upon, under the present laws, and the ill management of parish officers, tempt them to idleness and profligacy. It would be a dangerous experiment to render the maintenance of the poor discretionary, at a time when

when all the rich are outliving themselves: but certainly it is of bad consequence, that the maintenance is fixed by the laws; depending on which, many people make themselves poor by idleness and drunkenness, and apply for relief, when they ought rather to be sent to the house of correction. When the high price of the necessaries of life brings a poor industrious family into difficulties, so that they are obliged, after all their labour, to live upon what credit they can get; harassed with small debts, and dejected at the sight of their creditors; then my heart bleeds for them: I wish I was rich enough to relieve them all. I lament that there is not more œconomy in their betters; and I pray that God will some time shew them a better world than this they now live in. When we compare the wants of many honest poor people, some under difficulties, some in distress, some in sorrow and lamentation, with the thousands which are squandered away for no one good purpose by the rich; a sum, perhaps, in the adventures of a single night, is hazarded and lost, sufficient to clear and set up an hundred poor families for life: when we compare these things, what shall we say, but that wickedness and folly united, cannot shew us a worse

worse case? If he who gains the world, and loses his soul, be a fool, what is he who loses both! For here I am to warn all christian people, that God giveth to us, that we may be able to give to others. He is no respecter of persons; his ways are equal; his mercy is over all his works; and all men must account strictly to his justice. Then the prodigal, who hath tormented and ruined himself, will discover that he has also robbed the poor, and that the Almighty is their avenger. Therefore, let the poor be frugal, that they may lessen the troubles of the present life; and let the rich be prudent, that they may be charitable; so shall they find the blessing of God upon themselves and their affairs in this world, and secure an interest in the world to come.

SERMON

SERMON XV.

HOW IS IT THAT YE DO NOT DISCERN THIS TIME? LUKE xii. 56.

GOD never calls upon us to discern the ways of his Providence, without giving us some signs, to direct and assist us in our judgment; who can no more comprehend the Divine counsels, without the Divine light, than we can behold the sun, without the assistance of his own rays.

When our blessed Lord required the people to examine, and judge for themselves, from the signs which attended his coming, he called them to a pleasant as well as a profitable enquiry: for as he then came to save the world, all the signs given to confirm his mission, explained the end of it, and were signs of salvation. The blind received their sight, the ears of the deaf were opened, the sick

sick were healed; the dead were raised. Even the heathen poets, according to the expectation they had of so desirable an event, represent it under the most beautiful imagery, as the restoration of a golden age, in which man should recover that purity and happiness, of which he had so long been deprived by the corruption of his nature. And when these things were about to be fulfilled, we hear the servants of God, who were better informed, congratulating each other on the times they had lived to see; *Blessed art thou among women*, said Elizabeth to the holy Virgin: *Blessed are your eyes*, said the Lord to his disciples: many prophets and kings have desired to see the things which ye see, and have not seen them. The wise men of the east *rejoiced with exceeding great joy*, when they saw the star which directed them: the shepherds *glorified and praised God* for all the things which they had seen and heard: even the heavenly host uttered a song of triumph: the *heavens rejoiced*, and the *earth was glad*, when the Saviour was ushered into the world: all the signs of his birth, and of his ministry, were favourable and salutary, and inspired with hope and gladness all those who were wise enough to understand them.

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Such were the sentiments of men and angels at his first appearance. His second coming, to judge the world, hath also its signs; but none of them are pleasant: they are all alarming, all terrible; all partaking of the nature of that tremendous event in which they are to terminate: earthquakes, famines, pestilences, distress of nations: insurrections and tumults; disturbing the world, as storms agitate the wide waters of the sea: these are the things we are to look for. As bodily death is preceded by symptoms of a deadly sort; by terrors and faintings, and pangs, and convulsions; we have every reason to expect, that the world's death will be brought on by sins and disorders, upon a great scale, and of a new species. And here it is worth observing, that while men, by their perverseness, are *making* the *miseries* of the time, they are *marking* its *characters:* but, in ignorance; they know not what they do.

Herod and Pontius Pilate, and the rulers of the Jews, were all busy in bringing to pass what the hand and counsel of God had determined to be done; but without knowing it: they had ends and objects of their own, at which they were aiming for themselves, while they were fulfilling the purposes of God; and

and had they received any friendly hint of what they were doing, they would have rejected it with disdain, and probably have put the monitor to death.

The case is the same now. A considerable part of mankind are vehemently pursuing their own imaginations: and while they themselves are blind to the nature and consequences of their own actions, they are giving instruction to us: their darkness is our light; and I mean, with God's help, to use it as such upon the present occasion.

I am very sensible, that the attention of the public hath been nearly exhausted, and their curiosity satiated, with the many fearful accounts transmitted to us, and the pious and penitent reflections made upon them by good and learned men. But still, there is a certain view of the subject, so edifying, that we can scarcely dwell too much upon it. As politicians, we enquire how far government may suffer from dangerous innovations: as a commercial nation, we consider how trade may be affected: as a military people, we consult how war is to be carried on; with what resources; and what will be its probable issue. All this is very proper: but, as Christians, it is our duty to compare the signs of the time with

with what the Almighty Ruler of the world hath been pleased to open, concerning his own purposes, and the events to be expected as the world draws nearer to its end. I enter here upon no diffuse investigation; but mean to confine myself to *one* remarkable sign of the last days, which I think hath never yet received an adequate interpretation; not through the unskilfulness of interpreters; but, because it seems to be one of those mysterious predictions, which nothing but the event can enable us to understand: and which a succession of future events may still be opening to us farther than we can see at present.

It seems there was a persuasion very early in the Christian church, that the coming of Jesus Christ, to judge the world, was then near at hand. His judgment of the jewish nation had been foretold, in terms so applicable to his final judgment, that a mistake might thence arise, even among wise and pious Christians: of which St. Paul having heard, gives them proper information, in that remarkable passage of the second chapter of the second epistle to the *Thessalonians;* wherein he warns them of a very extraordinary fact, which would precede the final destruction of this world; and that the end of all things

things was not to be expected, till this should have come to pass. The passage is this,— *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away* (an apostacy) *first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.* It may be proper, that the words, in which a prophecy is delivered, should have a certain degree of obscurity, that they may not open too much before the time: and the same happens partly from the necessity of the case; because the thing which hath not as yet been known to the world, will be conceived with difficulty even from a plain description of it. This is applicable to the passage now before us; on which volumes have been written, with great uncertainty of interpretation; depending on facts, which however bad in their way, did certainly never come up to this description. But when the event brings its own interpretation with it, a child may see farther than the most learned could before: and if the whole passage be taken in its obvious sense, and with all its circumstances, it will apply itself so directly to a case in

hand, that little doubt can remain in the mind of any reader, who has no reason for shutting his eyes against the truth.

We observe, then, first, that a *falling away* should happen before the end of the world. The original calls it *an apostacy; which term*, in the mouth of a Christian apostle, can mean nothing but an apostacy from the Christian faith and worship. And this is more particularly said to consist in a revelation of a *man of sin*, the son of perdition. It is not necessary here to suppose, that this man of sin is only one individual person. In the tenth Psalm, when we read of the *man of the earth*, we do not understand a single person but *a character*, a sort of ungodly *people*, whose whole confidence is in this world. In like manner, the *man of sin* may very properly denote a particular sort of sinful character, or even the race of mankind, when become sinful in the extreme, according to that state of depravity, which is described in the words that follow. For, it seems, this man of sin *opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped.* Here the terms are less difficult in the original than in the English. *All that is called God* is literally every person, every man, who is called God:

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and the word we translate *worshipped* expresses most properly that sort of worship, which is given to venerable or august persons, whatever the office may be that makes them such.

If we enquire who they are that are *called God*, it immediately occurs, that the expression cannot so properly denote *God himself* as the vicegerents of God; those who are *called by his name.* And who are they? The Scripture itself will answer us: *I have said, ye are gods;* which words are spoken of princes and rulers; as it is also said in the law (Exod. xxii. 28.) *thou shalt not revile the* gods, *nor curse the* ruler *of thy people;* where the latter clause is but explanatory of the former. The reason of this is plain; rulers are called God, because they act under him, and execute his laws by his own authority. The question therefore is partly answered: they that are *called God* are kings and rulers. Our blessed Saviour himself tells us who they are in the New Testament—*He called them gods, to whom the word of God came.* John x. 35. The name of God, therefore, is plainly given to *men*, on account of their office and commission under the word of God, whether they be princes, prophets or priests; because they act in God's stead with respect to mankind. Our Saviour, therefore,

even in his human capacity, had a right to be *called God*, in virtue of his commission; and this seems to have been the intention of his argument with the Jews, as an *argumentum ad homines*, taken from the words of their own law.

We shall obtain some farther light into the character of the man of sin, if we go on with the apostle's account of him. The subject, it appears, had been mentioned to the disciples before, and privately expounded to them; for, says he, *ye know what witholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time; for the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth, will let, till he be taken out of the way; and then shall that wicked one be revealed whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.* This part of the description informs us, first, that the man of sin, and that mystery of iniquity which worketh for the producing of the character, was even then in the world, and would have broken out; but that, secondly, there was some restraining power, which served as a let or hinderance, to keep it down; till the time should come, when it should rise up in its true shape, and be fully displayed to the world. And, lastly, as it is to be destroyed by the actual presence of the Lord

in judgment, it must be the *last* form of sin, or power of iniquity, that shall appear in the world. It may be worth distinguishing here, though I would build nothing upon it, that the word for *wicked one* is [not πονηρος but ανομος], *lawless;* as casting out, and renouncing, all authority of law, as well human as divine.

What has been said amounts to this: that, in the last age of the world, before the coming of Christ, there should be an actual apostacy, or departure from the Christian faith and worship: that the sinful nature of man, rising up against the powers of religion and government, which had restrained it for so many ages, should break loose, and take a form of iniquity, such as may properly be called a new revelation of sin, which the world had never seen before. More particularly, that this form of sin should exalt itself against the authority of God in his ministers, whether civil or religious: that it should even seize upon the temple of God, and convert it into the temple of man; that it should exclude God, and make a God of itself, claiming the honours of divine worship. That this spirit of disobedience had always been at work; but that there was a power which hindered it

from shewing itself to the world, till the proper season; when that restraining power should no longer operate, but be *taken out of the way*, either by the violence of man, or the just judgment of God, or by the one co-operating with the other. And finally, that this is the last and most desperate state of sin, on which Christ himself shall come to take vengeance, when its measure (of which he is the only proper judge) shall be filled up. Then shall this *wicked one*, whose sin is the same with that of Lucifer, the rival of the Most High; and of Corah, who exalted himself against the authority of God in his ministers Moses and Aaron, the king and the priest; perish as they did. Satan was cast down, and the flames of heaven followed him. The fire of the Lord came forth, to destroy Corah and his company: and after the like form shall judgment be taken on this man of sin; who is to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall be revealed in flaming fire.

I will not omit, though it be scarcely necessary to observe after what has been said, that, in detecting the man of sin, we may use the same method as John the Baptist did for discover-

discovering the true Messiah, when he sent his disciples with this question, *Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?* The messengers in this case were bidden to observe, what was done by Jesus Christ, and were assured, that John would thence know for certain, who he was that did it: the works of salvation would infallibly point out the Saviour. So if we are inquiring after the man of sin, let us but observe what he does, and we shall be sure who he is. Thus for example; if instead of the sacred right of government, we find the sacred right of insurrection; instead of God only wise, the wisdom of man deified and adored in the temple of God; instead of the liberty of serving God, which is the only true freedom, the liberty of disobeying him; instead of that justice and mercy, in which only man can be like to God; the power of death, the delight of the devil, wantonly exercising itself in destroying men's lives; instead of laws for securing property, rapine and sacrilege laying every thing waste; we desire to know, what the true man of sin, whoever he is to be, and whenever he is to come, can do more? If there could be such a thing as an actual incarnation of the prince of the infernal re-

gions, it does not appear what he could do worse. He might perhaps display greater acts of power, as being an angel that excels in strength; but he could not commit greater acts of sin: For, what sins do we know of beyond rebellion, sacrilege, murder, and blasphemy? two of which are more than Lucifer was guilty of when he was cast out of heaven.

Little did we think, twenty years ago, that we should live to see these things fulfilled so nearly as they have been; and in shewing this, I shall have no occasion to invent or to exaggerate; the facts are such as will speak for themselves; and there is scarcely a person here present, who could not say to me what I am about to say to him. We all know, that in the neighbouring country, a direct apostacy hath taken effect. The Christian religion hath been renounced; not negatively, through corruption of manners, or neglect of truth; but positively, publicly, and in solemn form. The restraining power of government, and the obligations of law, have not been interrupted and defied, in the fury of tumultuous agitation, but absolutely *taken out of the way* and abolished. The *will* of a wicked nation hath been admitted as the only sovereign *law* now

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to be obeyed: and while the gospel teaches, that *there is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy*, we see a portentous company risen up, who take to themselves the sublime denomination of *legislators;* not under the authority of God, but in their own right; exclusive of his legislation, and in opposition to his power. And, that nothing may be wanting to the fulfilling of the prophecy, even in the letter, the churches have been shut up from the worship of God, and opened to admit the worship of *reason*; an idol unknown to the temples of Pagan antiquity. And what is the reason here intended? It is the reason of man; that is, of the philosopher or the plow-man; for the one is as much a man as the other; and where all are equal, as good a man. And what is the reason of man, but the mind of man! And what is the mind of man, but man himself; who now, as God, is actually seated in the temple of God to be worshipped. This is what the wisest man living could not have suspected some years ago; and what the most incredulous man cannot now deny: it is published and gloried in before the face of all people: the publication of Christianity itself was not more notorious. Government hath been murdered in the person

son of their prince; sin and blasphemy of every kind, like wild beasts that have broken their chains, have over-ran the country. No law subsists: the will of sinful man, or of the man of sin, is a law unto itself; and as the apostle once said, that the law was the strength of sin; so now it may be said, the strength of sin is the law; and there is no other. It is a law, which doth not punish robbery, but ordains it: a law, which doth not protect or save men's lives, but destroys them: and, if it had power according to its will, would not leave one honest man upon the earth. And hereby the man of sin proves himself to be, what the apostle calls him, the *son of perdition;* that is, the son of the destroyer, whose name is *Apollyon*; the son of that father, who was *a murderer from the beginning*, and leads all his children to the practice of his own favourite sin; who, in their capacity of legislators, have nothing to render them respectable, but new-invented terrors of torture and bloodshed. The prospect here becomes too shocking to be minutely delineated: every human creature, that has any feeling, must turn away from it with horror; and resolve, that if such be the world now left to us, it must surely be our duty and interest, to pray

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to God, that he would put an end to it: or, in the more devout and affecting language of our Liturgy, that he *would shortly accomplish the number of his elect, and hasten his kingdom.*

As the bee can extract honey from a poisonous flower, so may the Christian, when properly informed, derive comfort from every subject. Every event, whatsoever it may be in itself, is valuable to us, if the consideration of it tends to the confirming and strengthening of our faith: and how can it be otherwise, when we see with our eyes, that God is faithful and true, and that the sure word of his prophecy is daily fulfilling in the world? This brings the truth of the gospel home to our bosoms, and makes us living witnesses of it. When the wickedness of the Jews brought down the vengeance of heaven upon Jerusalem, the time was fearful and fatal to that people; while Christians considered the whole as an accomplishment of what their Master had foretold, and an earnest of their own approaching redemption. The more wicked this world becomes, the nearer is its end: corruption is never very remote from dissolution. This great subject will have different effects on the minds of different persons;

sons; to some of terror, from the avenging hand of God, whom in the moment of licentiousness they have insulted and defied; to others, of comfort and confidence, from the fulfilling of the Divine promises. The same waters of the flood, which drowned the world, supported that ark which preserved the family of Noah. When the world shall be in its last agonies of sin and perturbation, and men's hearts are failing them for fear; the servants of Christ are commanded to *lift up* their *heads* (which have been bowed down under reproaches and persecutions) and to *look up*, for their *redemption draweth nigh.* That the time is actually come, for the Christians of this generation to lift up their heads, it would be rash to affirm, and perhaps weak to believe: many strange things may intervene: yet thus far, I think, our persuasion may extend with reason; that all the servants of God, who now are, or shortly will be, leaving this present world, may go to rest, under an assurance that their separation from the body will be short: a consideration, which to our weak minds, subject to strong impressions from the ideas of time and place, may have its use in lessening the fear of death; and it is therefore worth encouraging.

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As you have seen, from the prediction of the apostle, that the revelation of the man of sin was an event, to happen before the end of the world; how thankful ought we to be, that it did not happen *here*: for, that the mystery of iniquity hath long been at work in this nation, cannot be denied: and it would have prevailed, but for that power which *letteth*, the restraining power of government, which it hath pleased God, of his unmerited goodness still to preserve amongst us. I fear there is too much truth in the assertion, that the first seeds of all this mischief were sown in Britain. Here it was, that *reason*, now deified in France, was first invested with the right of making its own religion; which, in other words, is a right of being its own God: and modern atheists have only carried that right to the point, to which it has always been tending, under the management of our deists. The lights and sanctions of religion can be only from God: if from man, then he is God to himself. This doctrine, in fairer words, was first started amongst us: and so was that other, that there is no power of government but from the power of the people. Here did that doctrine arise in the last century; and the murder of a king, with a sacrilegious plundering

dering of the church, and a miserable oppression of the people, soon followed. But, through the mercy of God, we were not given up: our mistakes did not terminate in atheism: and may the same Divine grace ſtill dispose us to take proper warning, and make a wise use of the example now before our eyes; that we may every day be farther from the danger, and ſafer from the infection, of apostacy: that the church, which God hath promised to preserve to the end of the world, may be preserved *here;* and that the little *faith* he shall find at his coming, may be found with *us.* AMEN.

SERMON

SERMON XVI.

WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMETH, SHALL HE FIND FAITH ON THE EARTH? LUKE XVIII. 8.

WHEN the Son of man dwelt among us, *faith* was the first thing he looked for in those with whom he conversed: and if it was not found, his mission, to such persons, was without effect. At his second coming, he will be looking for the same; but the text gives us little hope that he will find it. The words do not positively assert, that no faith shall then be left, but that the finding of it shall be questionable: it shall be so far lost, that the instances in which it is found shall be few and rare. With this the words of St. Paul agree; who teaches us, that *in the last*

days perilous times shall *come*, 2 Tim. iii. 1; that the truth should be resisted by men, as Moses was resisted by the perverse unbelieving magicians of Egypt, *Jannes* and *Jambres*, and that they should become, as those men were, *reprobate concerning the faith*, ver. 8. This character of the last age of the world falls in with another equally remarkable; I mean the appearance of the *man of sin*: though it may well be suspected, that both these characters of the time are reducible to one: for the man of sin arises out of the Christian faith, and raises himself upon the ruins of it; as the worm that destroys the fruit, is bred within it. That the depravity foretold in the Scripture, is the depravity of Christians, there can be no doubt; the prediction concerning it being thus worded—*the spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith*, &c. 1 Tim. iv. 1. The corruption, therefore, foretold, is a departure from the faith; and in that we may expect to see something much worse than the corruption of uninformed savage nature. An apostate from truth adds *perfidy* to his wickedness: he is in darkness, because he has *put out* the light; and can offend with that blasphemy

blasphemy against heaven, which is not in the power of an ignorant unbeliever.

It is not my design, however, to display his wickedness, but rather to shew how truly the text has pointed out the root and cause of it in a single word; in order to which it must first be shewed what Faith is, and what place it holds in the Christian religion. Of this it is so considerable a part, and so essential to all the rest, that it is frequently put for the whole: for what does the Apostle mean by departing from the *faith*, but departing from *Christianity?* and where he speaks of the *word of faith*, what does he intend, but the preaching of the *whole Gospel?* and the Gospel is called the word of faith, because faith only can receive what it delivers. The invisible things of God and of a spiritual world must be *told* to us; for we can neither see them nor know them: and faith receives the *testimony* on which they are revealed. Things invisible can have no evidence but that of the faith which believes them: and if the witness of them be from God, then is God the object of our faith: and if we live and act in consequence of that faith, then our works are wrought in God; and they are ac-

cepted, not for what is done, but for the faith with which it is done. He that does not receive the witness of God, makes God a *liar*; and of such a person it will ever be true, that his works, however specious they may appear, will be the works of opposition and pride, and have the nature of sin. As a *branch cannot bear grapes, unless it abide in the vine*, John xv. 4. no good work can be produced but in the life and faith of the Gospel. In all the works of faith, God is the immediate object: in all other works he has no share, and he hath promised no reward. He owes no man any thing; but he accepts and *rewards* every thing in those that believe in, *and diligently seek* him. Heb. xi. 6. He called Abraham from *his country*, and from *his kindred*, and from *his father's house*, Gen. xii. 1. and he went out, not knowing whither he went, Heb. xi. 8. but readily obeying such commands, as he could not thoroughly comprehend; he believed God, and it was imputed to him or accounted for righteousness, and he is proposed as a pattern to all believers. There is, strictly speaking, no such thing as *righteousness* in the world (*there is none righteous no not one*, Rom. x. 3.) but the act of faith is *accounted* for it, because it shews a love

love and friendship to God; and it is that only which he regards. With faith, a man sees every thing, he receives every thing, he is content with every thing, he loves every thing, that comes from God: without faith, he sees nothing, he receives nothing, he is discontented with every thing, he hates every thing, if God has any share in it. Though a matter be incontestably proved, even to the senses, it makes no difference: it is not received, unless there be in the heart that principle, which believes God on his own testimony.

The relations of things that are seen, may be proved and understood by the natural reason of man: but the relations between man and the things which are not seen, and the relations of those things between themselves, can be understood only by *faith:* they must be received on *testimony,* or not at all. If we wish to see a reason, why faith is so highly accounted of in the sight of God, we may take this one instead of all the rest. Virtue may be practised on worldly motives; and being only between man and man, the most specious virtue may be practised in hypocrisy, and be good for nothing: but faith being between man and God, on whom it is not possi-

ble for us to impose, there can be no such thing as hypocritical faith in God. But when faith is established, then virtue comes in well: and therefore we are bid to *add* to our faith *virtue.* In short, there can be no duty to God, but when it is done to God, *as to the Lord, and not unto men:* Ephes. vi. 7. but God being invisible, nothing can be done as to him, but in faith. And farther, as nothing can be done towards God, nothing can be received from him but by faith. The light is without its power to the man that has no eye: no gift can be offered to him that has no hand to take it. Of the spirit of man faith is the eye and the hand, which some men have, and some have not; *all men have not faith,* 2 Thess. iii. 2. How did it happen, when mercy went forth to all, that one sick man was cured, and another was not cured; but that the one *had faith to be healed,* and the other had not? No mighty work could be wrought, even by Omnipotence itself, where men had no faith to be wrought upon. Therefore faith gains all, and unbelief loses all. The Israelites in the wilderness fell short of Canaan, because of their *unbelief:* it is true they were guilty of many acts of ingratitude and disobedience: but the whole is laid to their

their want of faith: this was the cause of all: and so it is in every other man, with whom *God is not well pleased;* for *without faith it is impossible to please him.* Heb. xi. 6. And while faith is the root of all good, it is the only remedy against all the evils of life; it gives *patience,* and is the *victory that overcometh the world.* When the ſtorm arises, and the waves toss themselves, it knows that Christ is with it in the ship: it levels all mankind, by making the gifts of the poor equal to those of the rich: it performs what human strength cannot accomplish; *all things are possible to him that believeth.* Mar. ix. 23.

I have said thus much to convince you, that in all the transactions betwixt man and God, faith is every thing: and that without it, the name of Christianity may remain, but the thing is lost.

We are now to ask what is the present state of faith in the Christian world? But for this inquiry we shall not be well prepared, unless we attend first to a plain distinction, which is of the utmost importance in our present subject. When we speak of *reason,* we mean the *wisdom of man;* and I know of none who will not give me leave thus to define it: but by the Gospel, we mean the

word of faith, or the *wisdom of God*. Between these two there is an essential difference; and the Scripture assures us in the plainest language, that, ever since the entrance of sin, there has been an opposition. The manner in which God has thought proper to save mankind, is not approved by the wisdom of man. It is so contrary to his thoughts, and so mortifying to his wishes, that the preaching of it, being taken for foolishness, was seconded by the force of miracles; and even these were often found insufficient to make men receive it. And when it is admitted, it will always be in danger from the wisdom of man. There are in the world two interests, the human interest and the divine interest; and they can no more prevail both at once, than any other two parties in opposition. The one party rejoices to own, that man is wise *with* the word of God; the other boasts that man is wise *without* the word of God. The one raises high thoughts and imaginations, as so many *strong holds* and fortifications of human wisdom: the other is *mighty through God to the pulling them* all *down*, 2 Cor. x. 4. that God alone may be exalted: what the one builds, the other demolishes. Take *faith* and *reason* for the wisdom

dom of God and the wisdom of man, in which sense I have used them, and the opposition between them is undeniable: if that, then, be true, which a foolish man hath said, that the present age is the *age of reason*; then it must follow, that it is not the *age of faith*; which is, indeed, what he means; and then our point is proved without farther trouble. In such persons as himself and his friends, the assertion is true in its fullest sense: reason is triumphant over faith; that is, man has prevailed against God. And I wish, we could stop here; but it is our duty to examine, how far faith is decaying in better people, and on what principles? The attempt, I well know, is critical and dangerous; and, to some persons, I doubt not, it will give offence. But this we are not to regard; for there never yet was the time or place, when good could be done to some without offence given to others. It was the fate of the Gospel, and of Christ the author of it. When the Apostles preached the Gospel at Jerusalem, "say no more about it," said the Jews: and the Devils said to their Master, "why art thou come to torment us?" As if his design, which was to save the world, had been only to torment them. Such considerations

as these ought not to stop us at any time, and least of all at this time; let us therefore proceed.

When we review the different sorts of men as they present themselves to us on the present occasion, the first that occur are the Infidels of the age, who openly declare their unbelief. That the faith is not found in them, and that it never will be, needs no proving. Here the fact is as open as it is lamentable; and if we cast our eye over Christendom, we shall observe how they have increased of late years; perhaps there are ten for one, if the end of this century be compared with the beginning of it. The more we have of these in the earth, so much the less is faith found in it: and if we look forward, the prospect is tremendous! Should the world go on to its appointed period (whatever that may be) and this *humour* ſhould prevail in the proportion it hath of late years, it seems as if no flesh could be saved. But it is promised, for the sake of God's elect, that the *days shall be shortened*, Matt. xxiv. 22. A few years ago, it seemed as if the infidel party trusted to scoffing and jesting and pleasantry, and meant no more than to *laugh* the Gospel out of the world if they could. These were the coruscations

tions of wit, which played in the air for a while, and pretended to be gentle and harmless; but they were soon changed into the thunders of persecution, and followed by torrents of Christian blood; insomuch that it is probable the heathens, when they raged most furiously against the Gospel, did never shed so much blood in so short a time. If they have any friends in this country, they are found among persons of the same class, actuated by the same spirit; men of no religion, or of a false religion, which is as bad as none, and sometimes worse. These are the worst members of society amongst us.

Next to these are the men of pleasure, whose minds being wholly devoted to themselves, they see nothing of God or of another world. With them the present moment is all: and when pleasure is the God, we can easily tell how he will be worshipped. In the days of Faith and Piety, churches are seen to arise about a country, for the honour of God, and the practice of devotion: but in proportion as infidelity increases, it will be with us as with the Greeks and Romans; spectacles will be multiplied; theatres will arise, and outshine the glories and splendors of

of religion *. There was a time, when the priest of the country parish was seen leading his people to public prayers in the middle of the week; in some places on every day; where now no such practice is seen or thought of. If faith is alive in the heart, it will as certainly pray, as a living body will certainly breathe. If Christians do not pray so much in this age, as they used to do in the last; there is not so much faith amongst them now as there was then †. And if we proceed from

* One of our poets, a professed derider of faith, triumphs in this as a certain symptom of the decay of *superstition*: his words are too remarkable to be omitted:

In the good age of ghostly ignorance,
How did cathedrals rise, and zeal advance!
But now that pious pageantry's no more,
And stages thrive as churches did before.

There never was a more severe satire upon the entertainments of the theatre; not excepting even the Book of *Jeremiah Collier* with all its wit and spirit. The author of these lines was supposed to be Dr. *Garth*: and they were preached (as a prologue) to a very numerous congregation.

† An excellent discourse on the daily service of the Church of England, is distributed this year, as the annual present, by the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge; occasioned by the notorious decay of daily worship, particularly in cities and populous towns.

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the state of prayer, to the way of preaching and handling the Scripture; there again we are much degenerated; and all upon the same principle, the decay of faith. *We preach Christ crucified,* said the Apostle: too many of his successors, alas, might say, "*we do not preach Christ crucified,*" we have more of the orator and the philosopher than of the apostle, and have improved the obsolete Christian Homily, into an Essay upon Virtue. How many there may be of this way I do not conjecture: may their number be much less than is apprehended! but in the beginning of the last century there were none. In expounding the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, the decay of faith makes a great difference. It was the doctrine of St. Paul, in his charge to a Minister of the Gospel, that the Scriptures of the Old Testament were able to make men *wise unto salvation, through* faith *which is in Christ Jesus:* 2 Tim. iii. 15. consequently, if they are interpreted without that faith, their nature is changed, and they no longer answer their design. The word of God, like man, for whom it was given, consists of two parts, a body and a soul, called the Letter and the Spirit; the one the object of sense, the other of faith; and as the body without

without the spirit is dead, so is the Scripture a dead letter, unless we keep the spirit and interpretation of it. Instances might be given in abundance to shew my meaning; but let us be content with one.

The things which God did for our fathers, under Moses, have a spiritual relation to us, and shewed what God would do for us under the Gospel; and many excellent and necessary lessons are thence to be drawn *. Thus, they were saved by water, when they passed the Red Sea; as we are saved by water in baptism. They were fed with manna, as we are by that bread of life, which, like the manna, *came down from heaven!* They drank of miraculous waters from a rock, which rock, as St. Paul adds, was Christ, because he gives to all his thirsting followers the waters of life: *let him come to me,* said this rock himself, *and drink.* Of these and other like events, the plain history, as it was witnessed by the Jews of old, is the Letter: the meaning, as it concerns us Christians, is the Spirit; and the relation between the facts under Moses and those under Christ is so certain, that it is our duty to understand them, and to

* See 1 Cor. x.

reason

reason from the one to the other: and without so doing, we can have no proper sense of the greatness of the dispensation we are under, so marked out by such astonishing events so many ages ago. But without faith, to discern and embrace the spiritual things so delivered, the whole is lost upon us: and therefore it is not wonderful that we see an infidel of noble birth absolutely denying the likeness, and scoffing at the blessed Apostle, as a fanciful cabbalistical interpreter, who applies things to Christianity, which had no more relation to it than to what was then doing in France. From this teaching of the Apostle, you see what the *spirit* of the Old Testament means; and in the example I have given, you see the blindness of infidelity: and the same blindness will be more or less in every person, who reads, or criticises, without the eye of faith: and in proportion as this way of interpreting is either disliked or neglected we may be certain there is a decay of faith in the same proportion. Here lies the grand distinction between a Jew and a Christian: the Jew sees nothing of Christianity in the Old Testament, and rejects it with scorn when it is pointed out to him: the Christian sees it with admiration and conviction; and, if God has made

made him a *minister of the spirit*, 2 Cor. iii. 6. he teaches it to the people. If you understand what I have said, your own experience will confirm the observation: if you do *not* understand it, then your want of understanding is a proof of what I have said; that these things are not taught as they should be among Christians, and as they used to be formerly.

There is another remarkable instance, and that of great moment in these times, where the decay of faith is notorious. The Scripture teaches us that God governs the world, and that his *kingdom ruleth over all.* But this kingdom they only can *see*, who by faith *see him that is invisible.* In our Liturgy, wherein we pray as Christians, we frequently acknowledge this doctrine; the Scripture every where affirms it; but, in the world, what is become of it? Is it not almost universally forgotten or stigmatised? Are not principles publicly taught, and received, and boasted of, as the wisest in the world, which render this doctrine of the Scripture impertinent and impossible? In a neighbouring country thousands have been inhumanly butchered for adhering to it. Yet is the doctrine as true as the Gospel; and it is the only scheme that can be made sense of: but

when faith goes this doctrine goes with it; and the lawless kingdom of darkness, in which there is nothing but discord, confusion, and misery, rises up in the place of it. Many see and lament the confusion; but how few are there who acknowledge the true cause of it! However, let us hope, that the present times have opened many eyes*. A dreadful lesson hath been given, to alarm and enlighten us: they that are not enlightened are plunged farther into darkness, and inflamed to greater rage and insolence; which is the worst of all misfortunes. They say it hurts government to maintain the doctrine of the Liturgy, and to preach as we pray: but, I say, *not:* it is the want of this doctrine that makes the people perfidious and turbulent, and puts government upon shifts and expedients, by which the people are sufferers.

I have stated some effects, as they are too visible amongst us; and I hope nothing has been exaggerated. We are now to enquire

* See Mr. *Whitaker's* publication on the *real Origin of Government*, lately printed and sold by Mr. *Stockdale*, in *Piccadilly*. As this is the strongest book of its size and date against all the Sophisms and Subtilties of Republican Theorists, I must request the Reader, if a Christian, or willing to be such, to give it a fair hearing.

into

into the cause: and here you may be ready to answer, that the facts explain themselves; and that the want of faith is at the bottom of all the evils we complain of. But we must go a question farther: how has it come to pass, that we are thus wanting in the faith of our forefathers? The enemies of our faith are those we renounce at our baptism, the world, the flesh, and the devil. The world hath its vanities, its pomps and its pleasures: the flesh hath its passions; and the devil hath his devices. But these causes are too general; all ages have been exposed to their influence; and the world in consequence hath always been filled with vice and misery. This doth shew us how the age differs from those that were before it. Let us try then, if we cannot account for the change, as the infidels themselves account for it: let us allow that it is the *age of reason;* that is, the age in which the *wisdom of man* has been admitted as an authority against the *wisdom of God.* How this has happened it may be difficult to say, though the fact cannot be denied. I question very much whether I can trace the evil from the beginning: but I will give my own sense of it, submitting what I say to be

be corrected by those who see farther than I do.

We all know how Christianity was disgraced by the folly, hypocrisy, and cruelty of fanatical men in the last century; who surfeited the wise with their cantings and absurdities. To wipe away the reproach of which, it was thonght good to produce a scheme of religion not capable of such abuses; more reasonable in itself, and more worthy of philosophers; a religion of human reason. This is the plan adopted by our Deists, who profess a rule of life independent of Revelation: and so the facts of the Bible, with their consequences, on which our whole religion is founded, are all rejected as no longer necessary. Christianity is a scheme of facts; the other is a scheme of abstract reasoning. And, what is worst of all, the plan which thus answers the purposes of infidelity, was not ushered into the world by profligates and blasphemers (for in that case Christians would have stood upon their guard) but by persons of learning and religious character: who by once admitting that nature can furnish man with religion, have opened a door which will never be shut again. If nature is once allowed to be its own teacher, here is the finest

opportunity in the world for throwing off all the obligations of Christianity, and setting religion upon a new bottom. This is the use the Deists have made of it; and thus a religion from reason soon turns a man into an Infidel. But there is a middle generation of people, who would preserve some decency and solemnity of character, between believers and infidels: these are your *rational Christians* (as they call themselves) who allow in Christianity all that is agreeable to the religion of reason, but nothing more: and when they have divested Christianity of all that is Christian, they wonder why there should be any infidels; for that Christianity is the most *reasonable* thing in the world. To make it so, all the doctrines of faith are taken out of it: for nature knows not one of them. How can it reveal them to itself? It has no redemption from sin, no gift of divine grace, no danger from the tempter, no priesthood, no sacraments; in a word, it has not one of those things to which salvation is promised. It was never admitted into this country, till toward the latter end of the last century; since which the strides of infidelity have been gigantic. And what can be done? We have admitted a worm to the root of the tree of

life; and the withering of its top should have convinced us long ago of our mistake. Happy would it be, if, in these dangerous times, when many evils are come so near to maturity, men of learning and ability, whose designs are good, would be roused, before it be too late, to an impartial consideration of this case, as I have laid it before you.

There is another cause which has bad effects, besides this of a pretendedly—rational religion, which has operated with much mischief against the faith. When a man values himself upon his knowledge, he grows proud, and then he becomes weak. The knowledge of nature is a noble science, and deservedly holds a distinguished rank in this kingdom. The contemplation of nature should bring us nearer to God who framed it: but it seldom does; too often it has the contrary effect; and if we were to survey, with more accuracy than is proper for a sermon, the different classes of men, who have done most mischief to religion, we shall find them chiefly among those who take the name of *philosophers*. They make discoveries on matter, or think they do (for there is great contradiction among them) till they see no

such thing as spirit; and so fall into *materialism.* It was an old and true accusation, that the *world by wisdom knew not God:* 1 Cor. i. 21. and the same is the great misfortune of man at this day. Thousands are spoiled, not by philosophy itself, but by the *vain deceit* of philosophy. Tell a person of this sort, inflated with his own importance, that in order to be *wise* he must become *a fool:* and what good can be expected? His monitor will be set down for the fool; and the madman may probably be added. Some mathematicians, who see no farther than their own science, can find certainty no where else: not distinguishing, that there is *natural* certainty and *moral* certainty; and that by far the greater part of what we know and receive, is, and must be, founded upon the evidence of *testimony;* and he that disputes this kind of certainty hath as little *reason* in him as he that disputes the other. Now, *if we receive the witness of men,* as we do every day, and neither knowledge nor business can go on without it, *the witness of God is greater,* 1 John v. 9. We call the evidence of testimony *moral* evidence; but in the case of religion, we can trace it up to *natural evidence;* that is, to the miraculous

culous facts evident to the senses of men, which were publicly given in confirmation of the word of God. But it doth by no means follow, that because the evidence is natural and sensible, the doctrine proved thereby will be admitted. In multitudes of people it had not that effect; for instead of admitting the truth which they hated, they attempted to destroy the evidence; as in the case of the resurrection of Lazarus, and the resurrection of Christ himself. The wise men of Pharaoh's court were eye-witnesses to the miraculous deeds of Moses, but they were not convinced. And the apostle hath forewarned us, that men of like character, the wise men of the last days, should resist the truth, as *Jannes* and *Jambres*, the magicians of Egypt, withstood Moses. He calls them men of *corrupt minds*, in a state not fit for the reception of truth, and consequently *reprobate concerning the faith.* The formal rejection of Christianity by a nation of reprobates, who build every thing upon their philosophy (materialism), and are as busy in working natural wonders, and as conceited of what they do, as *Jannes* and *Jambres* were in the land of Egypt, is a melancholy demonstration of what I have here said, and

ought to serve as a warning to the philosophers of Britain.

I come now to the use of all that hath gone before; in which I must be brief.

The text gives us reason to expect, that at the coming of the Son of man, *faith* shall scarcely be *found on earth*. It is therefore obvious to conclude, that in proportion as the faith decays, the coming of Christ is drawing near. The scoffers of the last days may insolently demand of us, as it was foretold they should, *where is the promise of his coming?* and object that there is no sign of it, for that all things continue as they were: but this cannot now be said with truth; all things do not continue as they were: there hath been a marvellous change of late in the affairs of this world, and in the state of religion, with which all serious men are alarmed, justly apprehending that some still greater event is to follow. The signs of the time, to those who can read them, are many; and there is one which is but little noticed. When it is mentioned, some will be ready to tear their garments with rage, as if they had heard blasphemy.

Before the first coming of Jesus Christ, the world had been harassed, plundered and destroyed

stroyed for many years by a nation of *Republicans;* enthusiasts for *liberty* at home, but subjecting all nations in their progress to robbery and slavery: who, like wolves, by nature quarrelsome and ravenous, were banded together to make a prey of mankind. This was the state of the world before the first advent of Christ, and with his appearance it ended. In the ways of Providence there is an uniformity of conduct; and though we must not presume, where we have no positive direction to guide us, yet is it a very strange incident, that when the second coming of Christ is expected, the most powerful nation in Europe (for such they are) and the most monarchical (for such they were) should turn into the most savage and ravenous republicans, and form a plan, as the Romans did, of invading, overturning and plundering all other nations; *this nation* in particular, if it should ever be in their power, above all the rest. How this began, we can tell: how it will proceed, and by what farther steps, God only knows: but this we are sure of, that however long it may last, it must cease with the coming and kingdom of Christ. In the interval, they may rejoice and be as merry as Ahab was, when he had seized upon the pro-

perty of the murdered Naboth: but the fearful question will come at last, *hast thou killed, and also taken possession?* 1 Kings xxi. 19. Then shall rebellion, and blood-guiltiness, and blasphemy, call upon the mountains to hide them from Him, who will then manifest himself in the two characters, at present the objects of their peculiar hatred and contempt —a *Priest* and a *King*. It may be admired as a great exploit, that Christianity, with all its restraints, is driven out: but the world may be assured, this will be no peaceable event. The *faith*, planted throughout the earth, will never be rooted out without a tremendous shock. When the founder of our religion expired, the earth trembled, the sun was darkened, and all nature felt the stroke; and if his faith is to expire, the catastrophe will shake the world: a circumstance often spoken of in the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament, as preparatory to the great day of the Lord. How much the earth is moved at this time, we feel every day: how much more it may be before the end cometh, it is not for us to judge: but this we know, that all the commotions of the earth will terminate in the fulfilling of the promises

promises of God, when we shall receive a *kingdom which cannot be moved**.

It is either weak and childish, or wicked and profane, to consider this as a frightful subject. We learn many things to prepare us for the part we are to take in this world; but we learn Christianity to prepare us for that other world which it hath promised: and shall we be afraid to hear it is at hand? shall we pray daily that the kingdom of God may come; and shall we wish at the same time it may not come? Is not death the end of this world to every man; and is there any man who thinks he shall never see it? Does it come the sooner, because we preach about it? We may make people serious; and that may make them sober; and so they may live the longer; and then death will come the later. So in the other case; the Lord, in his time, must be revealed from heaven, with every circumstance of majesty and terror: *he that shall come will come*, and he will come in this manner. If we preach about it, we may make men wiser; and that will make the event less terrible; and we shall thereby do them the greatest kindness in the world.

* Heb. xii. 28. See also Hagg. ii. 7.

If

If any man can be brought to such a state of mind, as to hope for and desire that great event, which all the powers of earth and hell can never prevent; then he is a happy man indeed; and not before. Let us therefore all devoutly pray, that when we are told of the Lord's coming, our hearts may be ready to answer—*Amen; even so, come Lord Jesus.*

SERMON

SERMON XVII.

GOD SAW THAT THE WICKEDNESS OF MAN WAS GREAT IN THE EARTH, AND THAT EVERY IMAGINATION OF THE THOUGHTS OF HIS HEART WAS ONLY EVIL CONTINUALLY. GEN. VI. 5.

IN the short and comprehensive history of the time before the flood, we are told how sin first arose; how it came to maturity; and how it was punished. The words of this text do not give us a systematical account of it; but we may thence collect, what is the seat of it, and how it operates in the constitution of man: a subject which demands a close and serious scrutiny. For the nature of man is still the same: evil now keeps its place as in the beginning; it arises in the same manner, and gathers strength from the same causes.

Of

Of all the things we see, nothing can be truly understood in its first principles. God alone can see things in their beginnings, who is himself the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end of all things. We can trace them so far only as he hath been pleased to disclose them to us; not for physical, but for moral purposes.

The wickedness of man is here said to consist in the evil workings of his *imagination:* the imagination therefore is that faculty, in which the wickedness of man hath its beginning. To understand this better, we must examine what the imagination is, how it works, is worked upon, and with what effects; a matter of more concern to us, than all the curious disquisitions that can be written upon the understanding. He that can discover the seat of a disease, and tell us how it may be cured, or how it may be prevented, is a more useful man in an hospital, though in a lower office, than the curious demonstrator, who can descant on the structure and œconomy of the human frame. And here, one hint from the word of God, who knoweth whereof we are made, and in what respects we are become degenerate, will carry us farther in an hour, than our conjectural

jectural researches in the whole course of our lives.

Let us then first obtain what light we can from the sense of the words, which the wisdom of God hath used in the text, to denote the *imagination* and *thoughts* of man. The terms of the original are translated, I believe, as accurately as they can be; and only want a little explaining. The word we render *imagination*, has the sense of *forming* and *figuring*, as a potter forms the clay, or a seal gives the impression; and when applied to the mind, denotes its faculty of receiving and forming images. When it receives them it is passive; when it forms them it is active. The other word, which signifies the *thoughts*, has the sense of *adding*, *computing*, or *putting things together*: and as all the faculties of the mind can work together, like the members of the body, this operation of the head is very much under the influence of the heart, which is the seat of the passions: so that what the head can form in image and figure, the heart and affections can compound and put together. If the images of the mind are rightly compared, the result is truth; if improperly, unnaturally, or unfairly, the result is error. The old logicians,

glosians, in tracing the operations of the mind, have told us very truly, that the mind compares two ideas, and thence forms a judgment. If a man does this falsely for himself, he is deluded: but if his intent is to deceive, he does the same thing for others; and having presented to them a false composition of ideas, he leads their judgment wherever he pleases. To put the images of the mind truly and faithfully together, is the greatest wisdom of man; and it is what the word of God hath taught us how to do throughout the images of nature, particularly in the parables of Christ, by which he instructs the world; to put images falsely together, is the artifice of Sátan, by which he deceives the world; and by which wicked men never fail to deceive one another.

The subject now before us is so deep and curious, that it would admit of much subtile disquisition; which, however, I shall avoid as much as I can, and endeavour to make it plain and profitable, by shewing the right use of the imagination, with the dangers we are under, and the punishment we suffer from the abuse of it. After which, if I can prescribe such rules as will secure us from the evils

evils of the imagination, the moral end I have in view will be answered.

Truth being the great object of the understanding, the use of the imagination is to give us pictures and images of truth; and without the aid of such pictures, we can receive but little information. Give the mind a well-adapted image, and in that image it will see truth: an object so beautiful in itself, that it will see it with delight; and the influence between the imagination and the affections being reciprocal, a great advantage is obtained, if the affections are once interested in the cause of truth; or, (as the Scripture speaks) "receive the *love*" of it. 2 Thess. ii. 10. He is one of the best friends to mankind, who presents images to the head, with design to amend the heart. Emblems, of a moral signification, furnish a most excellent mode of instruction; especially to minds young and inexperienced: for while new ideas are acquired, and the fancy is amused, the heart gets understanding, and becomes prepared for action. Great pains have therefore been taken in this way by antient moralists: but the method itself is of such sovereign use, that our blessed Saviour observed it in all his discourses; he never spake without a parable; that

that is, without some natural illustration of truth; and the like method is followed in all the teaching of the Bible; where divine and moral truth is conveyed to the mind under some sign or figure of it; the examples of which are without end.

This mode of instruction is not only necessary, as being accommodated to the faculties of man; but it is of all others the most agreeable; because the mind is delighted with every kind of *imitation;* and accordingly, they that undertake to delight the mind, whatever their intention may be, always have recourse to imitation in some shape or other.

There are occasions, when it is not possible to get access to the judgment, and to set the truth before it, but under some image of the truth. Of this we have an example in the address of the prophet Nathan to King David, which may stand for all the rest. The prophet set before his imagination a parable, wherein wickedness and cruelty were so discernible, that the judgment of the king immediately pronounced upon the case, without being aware that he was passing sentence upon himself: and when he saw it was impossible to retract, he was brought to shame and penitence; to which, it is probable, he never

never could have been brought by any other way of reasoning: and all this was effected by applying properly to his imagination. There are few minds, however ill disposed, which may not be wrought upon in this oblique manner; and the ignorant are sooner instructed by it than by any other; which makes it so proper for the teaching of children. More may thus be learned in an hour from a plain simple teacher, than in a year, under the dry and abstracted language of the wisest philosopher. In the Parable of the Sower, a volume of Christian instruction is communicated under a short form. It sets before the eyes a case in the course of nature, parallel to the preaching of the gospel: and when once the similitude is pointed out, a train is kindled, which runs to a great length, and without which it is not easy for the mind to get forward. For there are subjects, which the best and the wisest of mankind cannot understand, till they are taught after the manner of children. There are things of a sublime and spiritual nature, which our reason would understand as they are in themselves; but it cannot be: for here the judgment can get nothing without the help of the imagination. For the conceiving of many

things which the gospel reveals, the glass of the natural creation must be used; and they must be viewed as they are thence reflected to the understanding. From the light of the day, we learn to value the light of divine truth; from the sun, too bright for the eyes to look upon, we learn, that God is too great for the mind to comprehend: from the element of air and its operations, we know there may be ministering spirits; in whom great power is united to a substance invisible: and even the divine Spirit, as the Lord and giver of life, is understood from the natural air, or breath, upon which we live. By such teaching as this, we are raised above ourselves; we ascend up to God by the scale of his creation; and while we are in this world can foretaste the wisdom of a better. This is the best and highest use of the imagination; and if I have been so happy as to make myself understood, we may now go on to the abuse of the imagination.

For, the thoughts of man's heart, which puts things truly together, for good, can put them falsely together, for evil; and be prepared for hell by those powers and actions of the mind, which should lift us up to heaven. The first evil that came into the world, entered by

by this way of the imagination. On that faculty the tempter practised, when he promised a sort of wisdom independent of God; and a sort of happiness consistent with disobedience. It was suggested to our first parents, that a new light would break in upon their minds; and that in consequence of it, they would rise to an equality with God. Here is first a vision for the head; and with it a lesson of pride for the heart: and thus the first sin is a pattern of every other. In every temptation, some alluring object is held up; the image of it works upon the heart; the heart re-acts upon the head; false and irrational compositions are formed, and vain expectations are raised; the act is sin; the result is error; and the end is death. Yet, in this manner doth the mind of man, in his present fallen state, and left to itself, never fail to work, if the text be true; *every imagination of the thoughts of his heart* is *only evil continually.* The first motion to sin begins in the imagination; and it may be questioned whether any one instance can be produced to the contrary. The passions, so productive of evil works, do all act as the imagination directs, to fulfil some vision it has entertained. Love, hatred, hope, fear, envy,

revenge, and despair, which contribute in their turns to agitate and torment the heart of man, do all operate according to the measures of the imagination; that is, according to the images the mind hath formed of persons and things; of itself within, and of the world without. The slightest affront will give unpardonable offence to the man who has formed a great idea of himself: when disappointed he is exceedingly hurt; because the magnitude of the disappointment will be according to the rate or value he has set upon his own person: so that one man shall even be killed outright with indignation and despair, by an accident, which another circumspect man, of an humble mind, would not feel for half an hour. A grand idea of this world in a man's head, with the love of its wealth or its fame in his heart, will work together, till they produce strange effects, and turn a man of sense into a fool: of which we can find no greater example, than in the case of an avaritious person; who admires gold for its use in procuring every thing; and with it procures nothing. The thoughts of his heart unite together wealth and happiness: the wealth, with much toil and anxiety, and perhaps no small degree of fraud and injustice,

is

is realized: but the happiness is still a vision as at first: it began in the imagination, and it never gets any farther.

Our danger will be better understood, when we consider how the imagination is furnished with matter by the two senses of the sight and the hearing. The Psalmist apprehending this, did wisely pray, *O turn away mine eyes lest they behold vanity!* When the passions are enslaved, and ruin is inevitable, how often do the deluded sufferers wish, they had never beheld such and such objects! So much sin enters by the sight, that the son of Sirach (chap. xxxi. 13.) pronounced, there is nothing more wicked than the eye; that therefore it *weepeth*, and is made the fountain of sorrow in every countenance. On this consideration, public spectacles and stage entertainments, so alluring to the eye, and so curiously provided, are always dangerous, and not seldom fatal: for by indulging this luxurious and insatiable appetite of the eye, distempers are introduced into the mind, of which it is never cured. The objects there presented to the sight, are either corrupting in themselves, or made so by art and circumstance. Piety, goodness and virtue, are quiet and obscure: they pass through

life without noise or figure: but the spirit of intrigue is active and busy; productive of plot and incident; vice is enthusiastic, impetuous, and picturesque; and furnishes matter of grand effect, fit for stages and theatres. When good and evil are both misrepresented, which often happens, the mind of an unguarded spectator catches the misrepresentation, and makes it a rule of action. Let the self-murderer appear with dignity, and the robber be merry and successful, upon the stage; suicides and thieves will be increased and multiplied. This is not speculation; it is undoubted fact. What a common artifice it is, to couple something that is great and sacred with something which is mean and contemptible; to make it ridiculous, and provoke insult! While that which is base, worthless, and pernicious, shall be raised and recommended, by joining it to something that is good; or, which the times agree to call good. These arts of deception are so necessary to the cause of wickedness, that prints, pictures, public sights, and shews, are always employed to work upon the mind, by the fabricators of public mischief. They can lead religion and loyalty to be hooted at and burned with disgrace; while sedition and

treason

treason are carried home upon men's shoulders in triumph. No preposterous disguises or deceptions can be wondered at, in any age or country, when it is remembered, that the Lord of Glory was disfigured by a wicked world with a crown of thorns; and the hand, that can aim the lightnings of heaven, insulted with a weak reed for a sceptre: while, perhaps, Barabbas, the acquitted felon, was attended home with acclamations.

The ears are imposed upon by sounds, as the eyes by appearances: the orator can work with deceitful images and false comparisons, to inflame the passions, and mislead the judgment. That prime intellectual juggler of the times, Voltaire, whose logic has driven the world to madness, never fails to work upon his readers with false associations: they are his peculiar manufacture. His reasonings are contemptible; but his power in debauching the minds of men, by setting false images before them, is prodigious, and would be unaccountable, if the principle now before us did not explain it all.

I shall conclude upon this part of my subject, with observing, that the Scripture imputes all the wickedness of an unbelieving world to the inventions of their imagination.

Here all the various formations and fictions of idolatry began: and they never ended, but in the total perversion of truth, the corrupting of manners, and the sanctifying of cruelty and all kinds of immorality. The old idols are many of them out of fashion: but the restless mind of man can never forbear its fictions; so that new idols are daily rising up; not without the pomp and pageantry of the old, to recommend them: such as liberty without law; majesty of the populace; equality in all ranks; by which and other like phantoms, while the world is amused, it is betrayed into confusion and calamity; and God alone can tell whether it will ever more be reduced to peace and order: for which, however, we should daily pray.

We have now seen how the imagination leads into sin; let us next inquire how it brings us into misery. For it is always found by those who consider the righteous ways of divine Providence, that men are punished by those things wherein they offend. When the entrance of sin brought sickness and death upon the body, the imagination also became weak and subject to some grievous distempers. It seems to be the faculty on which the fall hath taken effect. So long as it continues in a sound

a sound state, it is like a mirror, plain and bright, and reflects all objects truly: but if its polish be injured, it reflects them imperfectly; and then we conceive things slowly and obscurely: if it be lost, as in the case of ideots, it reflects nothing—and as there is no wickedness where there is no imagination, language gives the name of *an innocent* (Fr. un innocent) to the ideot. If the mirror hath a false figure, it will give the image wrong: it will make great things appear little, or little things great; or even distorted and monstrous, though they are regularly formed and beautiful. Sometimes one certain image is seen constantly by the mind, as if a figure were burned in upon the face of a mirror: and in some cases, the mind forms images involuntarily, and becomes like a body which has lost its retentive powers, and is both active and passive at once. Neither must we forget, that images are forced upon the mind, for torment, by the malignant Being who first introduced them for sin: even heathens were persuaded that ideas of horror might be raised in the mind, for punishment, by tormenting Furies. In all such extreme cases as these, the person is mad; his imagination is under no more controul when he is awake, than that

that of rational men when they are asleep; whence it is plain, the humiliating distemper of madness, the most deplorable evil of man's life, is seated in the imagination, where sin first began. And if it be considered, that there is no man, who at all times has the perfect command of his imagination, what can we say, but that all minds are subject to a sort of weakness, which may pass for a degree of insanity? The imaginations of some ingenious persons, particularly those of a poetical turn, work so freely and so violently, that they are nearer to madness than other men; and sometimes actually fall into it. If so, it seems as if what we call *genius*, may, in certain cases, be infirmity: like the beautiful variegations of a flower; which are known to proceed from the weakness of the plant.

It is scarcely credible, how much the evils of life are magnified, multiplied, and even created, as the imagination happens to be affected: which can strike with such force upon the passions, that sudden fear and terror, or even joy and surprize, have been followed by instant death. Persons of lively imaginations have irritable nerves; they suffer more from pain and grief of every kind; and pay a severe tax for their boasted sensibility.

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They that use but little air and exercise, and accustom themselves to an indolent delicate way of life, grow lax and soft and effeminate, and suffer more on every occasion, than those that rise early, and fare hardly, and preserve a firmness of habit and constitution. Too many there are, who by giving themselves up to the luxury of the imgination, become totally worthless and useless in their minds; never acting from reason and duty, but always from the impulses of fancy, which is no reasoning faculty. Many are taken off from the necessary employments of life, and fall into poverty and contempt, because truly, their imagination will allow them no time to work. Instead of feeding upon their labour, they are starving upon their thoughts. In every station of life, the indolent never fail to be tormented with imaginary evils: they contradict the great and universal law of God; who hath ordained, that man shall eat his bread, not in the fancies of his brain, but in the sweatings of his brow. Let it also be observed, that for want of useful employment, the mind wears and preys upon itself, like a mill, when it is not supplied with corn to work upon. We are all rightly informed, and, I believe, most of us convinced by experience,

experience, that man's life is a struggle, a warfare, a passage over a dangerous sea: but none can understand to what degree, and in what extent it is such, till they have reviewed the errors, and dangers, and sufferings of the imagination.

It is therefore our duty, and will be our wisdom, to consider how we may best secure ourselves against these evils.

First then, that the imagination may not be dangerously employed, let it be turned to its proper use. The word of God presents no images to the mind, but to lead us into truth: that word ought therefore to be the daily object of our attention. To set a mistaken value upon things, and make false estimates; to take little things for great, and great for little, is the worst misfortune that can befal the mind of man: his whole life is hereby thrown out of its due course; he becomes useless to others, and unhappy in himself. On the contrary, the Scripture gives us a sure rule for finding the weight and measure of every thing: and with the use of it, let us beseech God to deliver us from the wandering of our thoughts; by which we are so apt to be disturbed in our meditations and devotions. Every serious Christian must

must have found, how troublesome and impertinent the imagination is, when the soul should be given up to its prayers; by which all our sacrifices are so interrupted, and rendered so imperfect, that another prayer is commonly necessary at last, for forgiveness upon all the prayers that have gone before.

2. If we know the true excellence of the Scripture in furnishing the mind with images, we shall of course avoid all such reading as only fills the head with empty visions; which is too often the only excellence that can be found in works of genius. In a corrupt age, the vanity of invention abounds: idle novels arise, to feed upon public folly; as worms breed in putrid flesh, and then live upon it. Those fashionable productions, whose object is only to amuse, are the ruin of thousands; who collect from thence false ideas of themselves and of the world, which betray them into fatal mistakes, and render them totally unfit for the business of life. Nor is this the worst: the disappointed mind, with vanity to inflate it, and nothing solid to support it, is driven to the agonies of despair, and to the last miserable refuge of despair—God send

better

better things to every Christian soul in which there is a spark of grace!

3. Many strange doctrines, with a colouring of religion upon them, have been propagated of late years, nearly allied to the old heathen magic; which lead people into a new land of shadows and dreams, and have been known to produce such an effect upon the imagination, that it sees spectres at noon day, and is under the delusions of sleep while it is wide awake. If such reports are true, they should teach Christian people to beware how they listen to miraculous novelties in religion or pharmacy.

4. He that would be *sober-minded* must also learn to regulate his bodily appetites. Experience must have taught us all, what an effect our diet has upon our dreams: and it must, in its degree, have a like effect upon our waking thoughts. How differently do the same things appear according to the different states of the body! When the blood is inflamed, the mind falls into a delirium: and it is worthy of consideration, whether there be not persons, who, though not accounted insane, are yet never so perfectly in their senses, as they might be, if they would but do justice to their own understandings,

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by keeping themselves cool, and practising a little reasonable self-denial: for thus did the saints of God in the best ages preserve their minds pure, patient, humble, wise, and devout; and why should not the rule succeed as well now, when there is a natural reason for it?

5. Business is another remedy; and the best for the purpose is business with some aim, some useful object in view; to keep the thoughts at work in a right line, and prevent wanderings. Labour of some kind is the lot of man, to keep his restless mind out of mischief: and the careful mind, even though it be anxious, is always preferable to the empty: it is delivered from itself: it no longer looks inward on that gloomy vacuity, which it is impossible to survey without being dispirited. The labouring part of mankind are seldom tormented with the evils of the imagination; and in this respect they have an advantage over the rich, the learned, and the delicate: who will never be cured of their weakness but by that which preserves the strength of the poor; and the labours of the field or the garden are always open to the wealthy; and will be productive of pleasure to the mind, as well as health and soundness to

the senses. The Christian should carry it a little farther; and learn, as the apostle advises, to *endure hardness,* like a soldier, to keep afar off that effeminate tenderness of the frame, which induces a weakness of the imagination: and hardness of life will have the same effect upon the Christian, as it hath upon the soldier; it will lessen the fear of death, that greatest of all terrors; from which none can escape, and for which all must prepare.

6. To sum up all my rules in few words, "fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole of man:" with this, man is every thing he should be; and without it he is nothing. His security can be found only in that, with which all wisdom should begin and end, Religion; I mean the religion of faith, hope, and charity. The first conflict in Paradise was between faith and imagination; and it is continued, under the original form, at this day. *Imaginations* and *thoughts,* according to the language of the text, are the ruin of man: faith is the victory that overcomes them both. What imagination raises, however high and strong, faith throws down; and brings every thought into captivity: and having no dependence on man or itself, but only on God's truth, it is steadfast

fast and unmoveable against all the changeable forms of human wisdom. Hope, like the sunshine that gilds all objects, improves every innocent enjoyment, and makes every state of life supportable. Charity, delivered from the tormenting selfishness of nature, is the friend of God and man; and preserves a conscience void of offence. Where *these three* are found, there will the *Peace of God* abide: and with it that illumination of the heart, that holy light of the day-star, before which all imposture is detected, all shadows fly away. In which state, keep us, O God of Truth, according to the measure of this present time; and bring us to the consummation of it in thy presence, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A

FRIENDLY ADMONITION

TO THE

CHURCHMAN,

ON THE

SENSE AND SUFFICIENCY OF HIS RELIGION;

IN

TWO SERMONS,

On the Text of Matth. xviii. 17.

ADDRESSED TO THE

INHABITANTS

OF THE

PARISH OF PASTON, IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

TO THE

CONGREGATION

AT

PASTON.

MY DEAR BRETHREN,

HAVING more employment in my profession than will admit of my attending upon you so often as I wish, it is my endeavour, when I speak to you from the pulpit, to give you as much truth as I possibly can in a small compass.

It can be no offence to any of you to suppose, that as members of a con-

gregation in the Church of England, ou may stand in need of some seri- us admonition, concerning the nature f your profession. Too many there re, who follow the Church from cus- om, without considering and applying ersonally to themselves what the Re- gion of the Church teaches and re- quires. My business, in what I here resent to you, is to put you in mind f the sense and spirit of your worship, and to prove that you can have no just cause to depart from it.

It gave me a sincere pleasure to find that I was heard with so much atten- tion when I spake to you upon this subject; and that you wished for an opportunity of reading and laying up in your minds what I then delivered. In consequence of which the following

Discourses

Discourses are printed, and very affectionately recommended to your farther consideration.

That God Almighty may give you his Grace to apply them effectually; to your comfort here, and your eternal happiness hereafter; is the hearty prayer of

Your brother and servant,

For Christ's sake,

August 6, 1796.

W. JONES.

SERMON XVIII.

HEAR THE CHURCH. MATTH. XVIII. 17.

THERE are two sorts of Christians, who do not hear the Church; and of these, one sort is IN the Church. There are also two great errors, into which Christian people are betrayed; the first supposes, that the Church will save men *without godliness;* the second, that godliness will save men *without the Church.* The first was the error of the Jews, and is now the error of too many, who call themselves Churchmen: the other is the error of those that leave the Church to follow some private way of worship. Very plain rules may be laid down, by which both these parties may judge of themselves, if they will but be honest and sincere: and as the case of the

the Churchman is of nearer concern, I shall in this discourse address myself to him in the first place.

His profession is right: but it will do him no good, unless he is wise enough to keep up to the design and spirit of it. All the living creatures, which God hath made, are endued with *form* and *life*. There is no life that we know of without form. And the Church, which God hath made, is of a like constitution. It hath its forms, its sacraments, its ordinances; and with these, it has a life, sense, and spirit of them; without which, the Church is nothing but a form; that is, a body without a soul. Every Christian is taught, that with the sign, there is the thing signified. The sign is the pledge for information and assurance: the thing signified, is the inward and spiritual part: and neither of these can be, what God intended it should be, without the other. With every doctrine of the Church, there is a moral, or practice, which should attend it: and the latter should always follow: according to that admonition, *be ye doers of the word and not hearers only.* But here the Churchman falls into a mistake: if he complies with the form, he is too apt to think himself safe; and his mistake is the same

same as that of the Jew was formerly. If the Jew was circumcised on the eighth day, he was called a son of Abraham; and such he was; but not by the sign without the sense of it. For there was a circumcision made with hands; and there was another circumcision made without hands, which was inward upon the heart, by the power of God's Holy Spirit, disposing and enabling a man to put away all carnal and unclean affections. This latter was the inward and spiritual grace, without which a person was uncircumcised *in heart.* By the outward circumcision, he became a Jew; but unless the inward and spiritual were added, he was not a *true* Jew; not an *Israelite indeed.*

The case is the same, and the danger is the same, at this time, with the Christian, in regard to Baptism. The outward sign is water; and the promise of God to the office and authority of the Christian Ministry, makes that water effectual to the purpose intended. But what is the sense of the sign? What is it that water doeth? It washes and cleanses: and what that doeth to the outward man, the Spirit of God doeth to the inward. But the effect may remain with us; or, it may be lost. He that is washed may remain white and pure,

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as the sheep doth; or, he may turn again to the mire, as the swine doth. From the lives of too many Christians, it appears, that they have returned to the vileness of nature, and are now in the midst of it, defiling themselves with that sinfulness, which it is the work of Baptism to wash away.

The *true* Churchman is therefore mindful of his Baptism; knowing that its real value is not in the washing with water, but in the *new creature* *. He therefore continues in newness of life; according to that petition of the office in his behalf, wherein the Church prays, that he may *lead the rest of his life according to that beginning;* that he may be *dead unto sin, and alive unto righteousness.* The end of Baptism is *everlasting life:* for it makes us *members of Christ,* and consequently *heirs with Christ* of his Father's kingdom; but all this must be through a present life of righteousness. In this we have the true sense of Baptism: it is not only a *birth* but a *life,* never to be departed from. For Christ being dead unto sin, *dieth no more,* but liveth for ever unto God: and the Christian is to be conformed to the same pattern; sin should no

* Gal. vi. 15.

more

more *have dominion* over him: then is Baptism what it should be, and what the Church intends, and prays for, from the beginning.

The service of the Church requires every person to repeat the Articles of the Apostles Creed: and so far we may be said to *witness a good confession.* But does he that repeats the Creed endeavour to practice it? I say, practise it: for the Christian faith is practised in the Christian life: if not, it will be a witness against us; every word we repeat will condemn us. A man may say, he *believes in God:* but does he live as if he believed in him? Does he serve him, and shew the world that his faith is real by the life it produces? He believes that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary: but, is he *born of God:* and doth it appear to himself, or to any body else, that he is a *spiritual* man, begotten again by the Gospel to newness of life? He believes that Jesus Christ was crucified: but is *he* crucified? Is the *old man* of sin, that was born in him, put to *death?* Is he hated by bad people, for the good that is about him? Does he, for the sake of Christ, suffer any thing with Christ: or is he conformed to the world, that he may suffer nothing? He believes in the Holy Ghost:

Ghost: does he also believe, that the Holy Ghost now worketh in the Church for the remission of sin: that he is the Lord and giver of life; that there is no life to the soul of man without him; and that it is impossible to think a good thought, or do a good action, without the help of the good Spirit of God moving and assisting us; and that the Spirit is therefore most eminently called *the gift of God*, without which all other gifts and endowments are vain? He believes that the Church is *holy*: but has it made *him* holy; or, does he desire that it should *ever* make him holy? An unholy person may be in the Church; as he was at the feast, who was without a wedding garment; or, as the bad fishes were inclosed in the same net with the good ones: but he cannot continue; for when God shall come, to cast out all things that offend, he will not abide that inquisition.

The Commandments may be considered in the same way. For the honour of God, and the benefit of those who belong to the Church, they are commonly written about the Altar, and held up before our eyes. This is a very good custom, and agrees well with our profession: but then, the Churchman is to remember, that the Commandments which are

written

written upon our walls, are to be written upon our hearts: for this is the promise of God to the Gentiles, when they should be called into the Church of Christ: *I will put my law in their inward part, and write it in their hearts* *: and when this promise was fulfilled in the Gentiles, the Apostle boasts of them to the Jews, for the *work of the law written in their hearts*; so written, that no man had now any occasion to *teach another*; because the law transcribed into his own heart was thenceforward a source of teaching *to himself*: sufficient for admonition or justification to the conscience, or, as the Apostle words it, *their thoughts accusing, or else excusing one another.* So should the law now be written in the hearts of us Gentile-Christians, as a constant, and I may say, a *portable* rule of our obedience.

If the matter of the Commandments be well considered, particularly of the first and second, the sense extends much farther than we may suppose at first sight. For the heart of man, as well as his eyes, may have its idols. We are to have none but the true God in our *thoughts*: and instead of placing

* Jer. xxxi. 33. Heb. viii. 10.

idols

idols before the *imagination*, we are to *set the Lord always before us;* to be mindful, that he sees all our actions, and knows all our thoughts, and that his *eyes are in every place:* that he is the author of our happiness; and, as such, the supreme object of our love and affection. If we trust to any thing for our happiness more than to God, that object, whatever it may be; whether it be wealth, or pleasure, or fame, takes the place of God; and we become, in sense and effect, *Idolaters.* If we love the things of the world and trust in them, the world is our God. When the Apostle says, *whose God is their belly* *, he means, that all are idolaters, and the worst of idolaters, even *self-worshippers*, who make the gratification of their appetites the object of their actions, instead of making the Commandments of God the rule of their obedience. They act as their lusts command; not as God commands; and so, their belly is their God. This may seem a coarse expression, but it is very true: the happiness of such a person being like that of a beast, which knows of nothing above this present life. If the heart be set upon diversions, spectacles, appearance, precedence, or any

* Phil. iii. 19.

other thing which is merely of this world; it signifieth not what the object is, if it takes the affections away from God, to whom they are due; and in comparison of whom, all things are to be given up, if he requires it; even father, mother, wife, children; yea, and life itself also. This is our Saviour's doctrine to his Disciples: God will have no competitor.

Let every Churchman then ask himself, with this attention to the sense of the Commandments, "Do I shew that I have God for *my* God, by loving his worship? Do I frequent it when I have an opportunity? Or, do I put it from me as a thing that is needless, and prefer some other employment?" If that should be the case, then you have some higher object of your affections; some other God, whom you secretly prefer to the true. You may say, this is rigid doctrine; but this is the doctrine to which you and I are bound, if we are Churchmen indeed, and not in name and appearance only; and I should deceive you if I were to preach any other. I cannot here go through the Commandments; but I give you a key, with the help of which you may go through them for yourselves.

You are commanded farther to *love your neighbour as yourself:* by which it is meant, that you should act toward him by the same rule and measure as you would act toward yourself. He that means to hurt himself is justly accounted a madman; for no man in his right senses ever yet *hated his own flesh:* therefore certainly you are not to hurt your neighbour by any injurious *act:* no, nor by any injurious *word.* But now let every person ask himself, "Did I never raise any evil report against a neighbour, whom I do not like? Or, if I do not make evil myself, do I never take a pleasure in *hearing* it; and afterwards in reporting what I hear? This ought not to be: what envy delights to publish, charity should delight to conceal; for by so doing our own faults will be covered; of which we have much need. All the Commandments might be treated in this way: but instead of proceeding farther, let me observe to you again concerning them all, that it will signify little to you, how much the Church excels the Conventicle, in having the Commandments of God fairly written in letters of gold, to remind people of their duty; unless they are also written in the heart, and made a rule of action: or, as the Apostle speaks,

speaks, in language taken from the original history of the Commandments, unless they are transcribed from the tables of stone to the fleshly tables of the heart*. For the heart of man is by nature as hard as those tables on which the Commandments were first engraved: but God hath promised by the Prophet, to change that heart of stone into an heart of flesh, a substance soft and yielding on which an impression may be made: and when it is made, let us pray, and let us endeavour, that it may never be effaced any more.

I would speak with you a little in the same way about the other Sacrament of the Church, the Supper of the Lord. It is a blessed thing that the Church of England, after the example of the primitive times, offers it so frequently to the people: while perhaps among some other classes of Christians, the observation of it is neglected for a year, or several years, together. You are therefore to thank God, that you have such frequent opportunities of partaking of the Holy Communion; and you do well in appearing there; but then you are seriously to ask yourselves, what

* 2 Cor. iii. 3.

brings you there? Is it custom; or the example of your neighbours; or the fear of being singular? Or, is it, as it ought to be, a belief in Christ as the *life of the world*; and a desire to partake of that life? Do you go, as the Hebrews went, out in the wilderness to gather manna *for their life*; knowing that your spiritual life cannot be supported in this wilderness without *bread from heaven*? Do you go for the *strengthening and refreshing of your* souls, as the Catechism properly expresses it; that like labouring men you may be better enabled to *work out your own salvation*; and, together with your spiritual strength, receive a pledge of a blessed resurrection and a glorious immortality?

I have hitherto said nothing of the duty of *prayer*. But here the Church most eminently leads the way, in appointing a form of morning and evening service for every day of the year; and particular forms for every season of the year. But does it give us only the form? Does it not also teach us the sense and spirit of prayer: that prayer is an evidence of the Christian life, as breathing is the evidence of our natural life: that we are under dangers and necessities, out of which nothing but the right hand of God, stretched out to

those

those that cry unto him, can possibly save and deliver us? It therefore supposes that Churchmen pray every day—twice a-day—as they certainly ought, either at the Church, or in their families, or both. What must (or rather what *does)* become of families who do not pray together? What must become of single persons who do not pray for themselves by themselves? By disuse they become more and more averse to the duty, and farther from God in their lives and conversations; and he, of course, is farther from them. Such persons therefore as do not accustom themselves to pray; what are they? Are they true members of the Church of England? If they do not pray, they are not Christians; and cannot be said to be members of any Church: they cast themselves out of all Churches. Their life is a passage through storms and tempests over a dangerous sea: what will become of them in life? What will become of them in death? What will become of them after death? For the soul will continue in such a state after death, as it lives and dies in. If it dies without prayer, it will continue without God. The souls of the righteous are represented to us in the Revelation as still continuing in prayer, and uttering to God what

was the petition of their lives, *how long, O Lord, holy and true**, &c. In this language do they cry unto God to fulfil that righteous judgment upon the world, which the Church of the living prayeth for; particularly in the Burial Service, where we call upon God to *accomplish the number of his elect, and to hasten his kingdom.*

Enough has been said, I hope, to convince you, what it is, in propriety of speech, to *hear* the Church: that it is not to hear with your *ears* only, but to understand with your *heart*; to keep up to the sense of her doctrines, and the life and spirit of her forms. When our blessed Saviour described in few words the character of *Nathaniel*, he said, *behold an Israelite indeed:* for all were not Israel in spirit, that were of Israel by their birth and education. So may we now say of him, that keeps up to the *life*, while he follows the forms of the Church; *behold a Churchman indeed*; and it is devoutly to be wished, that the portrait I have drawn were more frequently verified. But as there were not many *Nathaniels* when Christ visited the Church of Israel; so it is to be feared, that of the Nathaniels of the

* Rev. vi. 10.

present

present day there is no great number: and there will be fewer every day; if the delusions and deceptions, with which mankind are so easily drawn away, should increase upon us as they have of late years. I have shewn you plainly how the character is to be attained: and instead of blaming me, as if I had brought up a new doctrine to disturb your consciences, you are to examine yourselves impartially by this plain rule of *hearing the Church.* You may have persuaded yourselves that if you believe the facts of Christianity, you have the religion of the Church; and that nothing more is necessary. But the facts of the Christian history are all *without* you: what is it that happens *within* you? Do you believe the inward distempered state of your nature; and that the Gospel is a remedy, sent from Heaven to those who are *poor and blind, and naked* *? To believe the Gospel truly, is not to believe that there is such a thing as the Gospel, (for the Devils know that;) but that it is the power of God for the salvation of man: that there is no life without the spirit of it; no teaching without the light of it; that the wisdom of nature can never shew

* Rev. iii. 17.

in the will of God; and the works of nature never render us acceptable to Him: that if laws are *written in the heart*, they are God's laws, transferred to the heart, according to his promise, by the power of his Grace. If this be your religion, we may then truly say that you are a Churchman; and every good man will allow it. But if you take the outside of Christianity, Christianity will never be more than the outside of you: your religion will be a form, and you yourself will be a lifeless Christian. On this subject, no rule is so worthy to be remembered, as that short and plain rule of the Apostle; *he is a Jew, which is one inwardly* *. For all the gifts of God's religion are inward: nothing but signs are outward; and if the Churchman is an outward Christian, he is nothing but the sign of a Christian; with no more true life in him, than the sign of a man's head, which is painted on a board: and how bright and glaring soever the colours may be, it is but a board at last.

I do not say these things with design to reflect upon any person in particular: my design is to stir up the minds of you all by way

* Rom. ii. 29.

of

of remembrance, and prevent a fatal security, of which there is too much in all places. Many are prevailed upon to leave the Church, and frequent other assemblies, because there is nothing but form amongst us: and whoever he may be, that contributes to the truth of the accusation, he is partaker in other men's sins; he is answerable for the ill use that is made of the fact, to intice people from the sober and edifying worship of the Church. Be in earnest then in your profession: be sincere, and alive, as you ought to be, and you will disarm them: perhaps you may convert them from the error of their ways: but if not, you will secure yourself: the Church of God will be to you what he intended it should be to all; and the promises made to *it* will be made to *you.*

And now, my friends, having taken courage to speak a little plain truth to Christians of our own sort; reason and duty require, that I should be as plain when I speak of Christians, who are of a different sort, who think they are better than we are. The godliness which we want, they profess to have. They know that our ungodliness will not save us *in* the Church, but they think that their own godliness will save them *out* of it. How far that may

may be true or false, is a question which deserves great consideration: and I shall, for your security, answer it as far as I am able on a plain principle, the application of which will require but few words. I conclude at present with a prayer for both parties: not that you, or I, or they, may distinguish ourselves; for which all mankind are so given to strive; but that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

SERMON

SERMON XIX.

HEAR THE CHURCH. MATTH. XVIII. 17.

I REMINDED you, in a former discourse, that Christians are betrayed into the two great errors, of living in the Church without godliness; and of professing godliness without living in the Church. In opposition to the former of these I shewed you, that true godliness is the sense and spirit of all the forms and services of the Church; and that forms and services have no meaning, unless they are so understood and applied. Men may call themselves Churchmen, while they are without the life of the Church: but they are not Churchmen indeed, and will certainly fall short of the benefits of their profession. This case, I think, was made so plain,

plain, that no reasonable person could misunderstand it.

That you may not fall into the other error, of professing godliness independent of the Church, I am now to shew you what dangers there are on that side; and to do this effectually, I shall lay down a plain and easy doctrine, which none can deny, and which all may understand. When this is done, we shall be upon firm ground; and may apply the doctrine as we find occasion.

I say then, that man consists of a soul and a body, which the Scripture distinguishes by the inner and the outward man. I say farther, that this being the nature of man, his soul cannot be taught but through the senses of the body; whence all the institutions of God, who teaches after a perfect manner, will have something outward to teach, when there is something inward to be understood: or, in the plain words of our Catechism, that if there be any *inward and spiritual grace*, it will be attended with some *outward and visible sign, for a pledge and assurance thereof.* Hence it will follow, that if God has planted any Church upon earth, that Church will be outward and visible, as well as inward and spiritual; and that we must be of the Church outwardly,

outwardly, in order to be of the Church inwardly.

Thus we shall find the matter to be upon examination. The Apostle teaches us, that *as the body is one, and hath many members—so also is Christ: for by one spirit we are all baptized into one body* *. This body being called *Christ*, we cannot be members of Christ without being members of this body. So far as Baptism is an invisible work of Grace, it makes us members of an invisible society: but Baptism being also a visible thing, there must be a visible body answering to it. From this similitude of a body, the Apostle argues that as a body cannot be a body, unless it has members of different stations and uses, so God hath *set* † officers of different orders in the Church, who have all one common life, and are under one common law of the Spirit; with their several uses so distinguished, that there need be no more disorder or confusion in the Church than in the body natural.

It appears then, that although the Spirit of God be the life of this body; yet must the body itself be an outward and visible

* 1 Cor. xii. 13. † Ibid. v. 28.

thing.

thing. It always hath been such from the beginning; when although it had some gifts in it, which were proper to that time, yet had it others which were proper to this. For while it had miracles, prophecies, and diversity of tongues, it had also *teachers*, *governments*, and *helps*, which are as necessary now as they were then; for without teaching, and governing, and helping when there is need, no society ever did or ever can subsist. These therefore must remain with us to the end of the world. And the Apostle having declared, that they are all *set* in the Church by God himself; it must follow that they are set neither by the people, nor by themselves; but set by God in such a way, that we may know the thing to be of his doing; and this we do know when we see it to be done by those whom he hath already appointed. All persons of the ministry are set in the Church in an outward and visible manner, by the laying on of hands; and have been so appointed from the time of Jesus Christ to this day; yea, from the time of Moses, who was two thousand years before. *Give him a charge in their sight*[a], said God to Moses, that all the

[a] Numb. xxvii. 19.

people

people might be sure he had the true commission. The Scripture knows of no such thing as a calling which is out of sight: the inward calling is ever attended with the outward, that is, by some infallible sign and testimony which all men may see and understand. And now we are upon the subject of Jewish Ordination, it is a matter worth your observing, that less is said about the governments of the Christian Church in the New Testament than we might expect, because they were copied from the Jewish. The Apostles were twelve in number, after the twelve Patriarchs who were heads of the tribes of Israel *; and the Disciples were seventy, after the seventy Elders of Moses. History also does abundantly testify, that in Christian Churches, wherever they were planted, there was a Bishop, and Priests, and Deacons; answering to the High Priest, and Priests, and Levites of the Law. For the Christian and Jewish Churches were not two, but a continuation of the one Church of God. Things were thus regularly ordained, because

* I am not sure that a division into tribes does not take place, in a mystical sense, in the Christian Church. See and consider Acts xxvi. 7. Jam. i. 1.

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it is of infinite consequence to man, that he should always be able to know, by certain outward marks and signs, where and with whom the gifts of God are to be found. Where spiritual things are administered there is ever something open to the sight of all, as a rule to direct, that we may never be left in uncertainty.

The same rule will hold good, if we apply it to the spirit and character of individual men. We are never to judge of a man from any thing which he thinks, or has thought, or which he now says and tells, of what passes in his own mind. *That* may be evidence to *him*, but it is none to *us*; and is therefore never to be drawn into a rule. There must be some outward mark; therefore saith our Lord, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may *see* your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." We may call ourselves the Disciples of Christ in heart and affection, and think ourselves to be such: but how are other men to know that we are truly so? Here again we have an outward sign to direct us: "By this shall all men *know* that ye are my Disciples, if ye have love one to another*. The reason is good, and

* John xiii. 35.

the

the rule is general: we are to know men by their fruits, not by their thoughts; and to judge of them accordingly, not by what they say, but by what they do.

After this, you will not wonder, that a contrary rule is followed by those who have any intention to deceive. They lead you off in the first place from outward means and visible evidences; that when you are unsettled in this respect, the way may be open, and you may be carried into farther delusion.

Having now laid my foundation, by shewing you the invariable rule of divine wisdom, with the reasons of it; this alone, if you bear it in mind, may be sufficient to keep you in the right way, and preserve you from going into the by-paths of religion. But as there are specious objections, from which well-disposed minds may be in danger, I shall produce and answer some of the chief of them.

1. It is made a grand objection against the Church, that the people who follow it are formal and lifeless in their profession. Too many of them are so: we see and lament it: but how many soever they may be, this is no reason for leaving them—far from it: for, hath it not always been thus? The Kingdom of Heaven is like a net cast into the sea,

*which gathered of every kind, both bad and good**. In the Church, the righteous and the wicked are mixt together; and if this be a reason for leaving the Church, it always was a reason; the best people should always have left it; and then, what would have become of it? Allowing such persons to be as good as they think themselves, would it not be better that they should stay, and try if they can amend, by their good advice and example, those who are not so perfect as themselves? That would be a charitable measure. Besides, if the bad affright and drive them away from the Church, ought not the good to prevail with them to continue in it? Is it just to desert the righteous for the sake of the wicked? Many devout godly people are to be found in the Church, more than are commonly observed. Much of the fear and love of God is with many Christians, who make no great shew of themselves. In the worst of times, the Church has many who know God, and are known of him. Could any thing be more corrupt than the generality of the Jewish people were in the time of our blessed Saviour? Yet you read of Anna the

* Matt. xiii. 47.

Prophetess,

Prophetess, who departed not from the Temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. Many bad people frequented the place, but that was no reason with her for leaving it; she did not follow the people, she followed God; and there at the latter end of her days she found him: she saw the blessed Jesus there; which would not have happened, if she had objected to the bad members of the congregation, as not holy and good enough for her to assemble with. And did not Christ himself frequent this same Temple afterwards, and teach in it afterwards, though there were many great and scandalous abuses, which he endeavoured to reform; not by taking affront and leaving the congregation, but by staying with them, and bearing with their contradiction and ill humours.

But, as the heart of man, when judging of itself, is very deceitful, it may not be for reasons of piety, as they believe and would have it supposed, when persons forsake the congregation; but for reasons of a very different kind; for pride; for distinction; to shew the world how much wiser they are: and if that should be the case, will not the pride that separates them from man separate them from God at the same time, and spoil

all their religion, instead of bringing them nearer to perfection? Christians would not be so weak as they are in this respect, if they did but duly consider, that true piety does not lead to *will-worship*, in which men consult the pleasing of their fancy; but in a conformity of the mind to the will and the ways of God. This is the severest trial of man, and few are able to endure it: nay, not one amongst us, without the special grace of God, disposing the heart to self-abasement, and poverty of spirit.

There is another danger which persons may bring themselves into, by boasting of an higher degree of piety than that of the Church: for while they do themselves no real good, they may be doing much harm to other Christians. The great godliness, on which they value themselves, may prove at last to be false and counterfeit; or it may appear weak and ignorant; more zealous than wise; or it may be envious and quarrelsome: and thereby they will give persons occasion to say, that all pretension to superior piety is a suspicious thing, generally taken up for some bad purpose. Thus they bring universal reproach upon a religious character: it being concluded from their example, that honest and sensible people

will

will be better thought of, if they purposely avoid all appearances of godliness, and discover as little of it as possible in their words and actions. This is a fearful conclusion, and hastens many a dangerous downfall. I have heard, and many others must have heard, persons talking and arguing after this fashion, whom it is out of our power to convince; and perhaps it is convenient to themselves that they never should be convinced. It is one lamentable consequence of division, that the mouths of such vain talkers are opened. Persons divided in their religious sentiments watch one another with an evil eye; and instead of hiding one another's faults, are delighted with detections and aggravations. This is to the great disadvantage of all piety: it is an evil we should be studious to avoid; and the prospect of that havock which it makes amongst us, should be one great inducement towards a prudent and charitable union with our fellow Christians.

It is said farther, that there is better teaching out of the Church. But I do sincerely believe on the other hand, that bad as teaching of the Church may be, there is worse teaching out of it than in it. This indeed we must confess, that so far as the doctrine de-

pends upon the minister, it is not always right: but we may say at the same time, that so far as the doctrine depends upon the Church, it is never wrong. The Church duly delivers the teaching of God in the Scriptures; and has an unexceptionable form of sound Christian teaching in her Homilies: I wish the people heard them more frequently, and that the spirit of those Homilies was followed by all the Teachers of the Church.

But, does all religion consist in man's preaching? Some argue as if they thought so. Hath not God preached to us all in his Gospel; and doth he not say, "My House shall be called the House of Prayer?" Did not the Apostles, though appointed to preach in all the world, go to pray in the Temple? They understood that God had ordained them to preach, with design that they should convert the world to the practice of praying: and it would have been strange, if they had not set the example of it in their own persons.—*Preaching* meant at first the publishing of the Gospel; that the world might be brought over to it: when the world is converted, and the Scriptures are received as the word of God, the duty then is to read, and to pray, and

and to act, as the Gospel instructs; which Gospel is now daily preaching to us all. The more hopeful employment of the ministry *now*, and of more extensive benefit, is that of teaching the first elements of Christianity in the Catechism. Preaching will never teach these, if they have not been taught before. No science can be understood properly unless we begin with its elements. For this reason I have always been so desirous, that children should be well instructed in their Catechism. I received the advice many years ago from a Bishop of this Church, who was your Diocesan*: he said, "Whatever you do be diligent in catechising; it is of much more use than preaching." So indeed it is: and there are those who can witness that I have never been wanting in the practice: in which if any minister engages with sincerity and affection, I can promise him, from my own experience, that the smiles of the little children of his parish will make him amends for many of the frowns he may meet with in the world.

It is a farther temptation to people to leave the Church, because it has been supposed of

* Bishop Hinchcliffe.

late years that something better is now found out, which will answer the purpose without it—I mean a *new birth*. That there is a new birth in the Scripture, and that it is necessary to Salvation, no man can deny; for, saith our Saviour, "except a man be born again of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven *." There is then a new birth of the *spirit*; but as *water* is mentioned with it, it must mean the new birth in Christian *Baptism*. There is also a *Regeneration* spoken of by St. Paul †: but as it is called the *washing* of Regeneration, this also must refer to the water of Baptism. The Church of England follows this doctrine of the Scripture, and understands Regeneration as the gift of God in Baptism; for this is the language of the Church in the office: "We yield Thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased Thee to *regenerate* this infant with thy Holy Spirit." Regeneration therefore is the work of the Holy Spirit in Baptism: and neither the Scripture nor the Church give us any encouragement to believe, that Christians are ever baptized by the hearing of a Sermon. If it be said that the presence

* John iii. 5. † Titus iii 5.

of

of the Spirit of God cannot be without the effect of Regeneration; and that every person who has the Spirit of God, must be born of God; this is not accurate Divinity; even allowing them to have the Spirit as they say. For the gift of the Spirit may be one thing, and Regeneration may be another. When the Holy Ghost fell on them that heard the word, this was the effect of preaching: but the Apostle commanded those very persons to be baptised with water, although they had received the Holy Ghost *. Therefore the receiving of the Holy Ghost, so far as this is the effect of preaching, is different from what is done in Baptism, and is not what is meant by Regeneration, or the New Birth. If it can be shewn, that the Gospel any where promises a New Birth, independent of Baptism, we will believe it: but as the Church could never find it, we never shall; and they that teach it, and say there is experience for it, have no warrant from the Scripture.

A famous Preacher of late times, who believed, and pleaded for, all the extraordinary symptoms of a New Birth, refers us for the reality of it to numbers of people who

* Acts x. 47.

had

had experience of it. "Ask them," says he, "they will not deceive you." But supposing they are deceived themselves, they will in that case deceive us also; and it is no wonder if they should; for most men are inclined to repeat a story which magnifies themselves; and their teachers are willing that they should repeat it, for it magnifies them too *. These facts, whether true or false, are attended with a mistake. The conversion of the mind to a sober and goldy life is here confounded with a New Birth; and the tendency of this is to depreciate the means of Grace; which enthusiasm never fails to do: but Conversion and Regeneration are never confounded in the Scripture: they are different things, and the one may be without the other. Infants are subjects of Regeneration in Baptism; but they are not capable of Conversion: nor do they want it, being already in that simple unas-

* The like wonders were boasted of by the Puritans of the last century; whose ministry, as it is noted by *Merick Casaubon*, produced in their followers "first *desperation*, or somewhat very near to it; then an *absolute confidence* grounded upon it. That this is the only way is an invention of their own, which I think hath more of policy in it, in the first inventors and abettors, than of ignorance." *Casaubon* on Credulity and Incredulity, p. 193.

suming

suming state of mind, to which grown persons are to be converted, and become as little children *. Baptism is one of the necessary means of Grace: it is the gift of God: no man can make it, or substitute any thing else in the place of it: but if he wishes to raise a party, and make a Church of his own, he will depreciate Baptism, and teach you how you may do without it, by finding a sort of conversion, which will answer the same end. He will lead you from outward means to inward testimonies: texts will be misapplied; and the evidences of Christianity will all be reduced to personal experience; of which experience another person knows nothing, and in which the person himself may be grossly mistaken. The consequences are very bad; for some think they have this experience, and proceed with confidence to farther errors: others wish for it in vain, and not being able to perceive it, fall into despair, and sometimes into distraction; they are left without the witness which they are taught to expect, and therefore think they are lost. But the witness which the Scripture teaches, is that of *faith and a good conscience:* faith is the witness to

* Matth. xviii. 3.

ourselves; and obedience, which is the fruit of it, is the witness to others. In this doctrine there is no danger.

Before I conclude, let me forewarn you, that good people are in danger (perhaps in most danger) of being imposed upon by strange appearances; supposing them to be *new*, when they are not. Above two hundred years ago, the party that began to trouble this kingdom, and at length completed its ruin, began with setting up the spirit, and decrying the order and authority both of Church and State. The people that troubled the Christian Church, in its earliest days, were always of the same fashion: they never failed to *despise government*, and taught their followers to do the same*. They boasted of superior gifts in praying, preaching, and converting: but the Apostle settled that argument for ever with the Church of Corinth. They were disputing, and dividing themselves into parties, upon the reputation of their gifts: but he shewed them, that although it was a good thing to have good gifts, there was a more excellent way of salvation, the way of peace and charity; without which all their

* 2 Pet. ii. 10. Jude 8.

gifts,

gifts, however great and wonderful in the sight of the people, would be of no value in the sight of God. It signifies not (argues he) what I have and what I understand; if I have no charity I am nothing. How extremely dangerous is it then, to break the order and peace of the Church; even though it be done with a sincere desire to promote faith and piety! for whatever good appearances may attend it for a time, they will not end well. If we do evil that good may come, we shall find, sooner or later, that the evil will remain and the good will be lost: which might be confirmed by the recent example of a large body of people, who are now divided from us without being united among themselves. Division is not the way to unity: all experience teaches us, that it leads to more division; and that there can in fact be no security, no *pillar and ground* for truth to rest upon, no stability, no certainty, but in that Church, with its doctrines, institutions, and orders, which God hath appointed in the word. I therefore end as I began: I say, *Hear the Church.* Let the Churchman understand, that he then only hears the Church as he ought, when the christian forms lead him to the christian life. And let

let others learn, that if they would have the christian life, they must have the christian forms. These hath God joined together as soul and body. No man ever had, or ever will have, any authority to put them asunder; and I have given you my reasons why it cannot be attempted without danger to the christian cause, and to the salvation of christian people.

THE

THE

USE AND ABUSE OF THIS WORLD:

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT

ST. BENE'T GRACECHURCH,

IN THE

CITY OF LONDON,

On Sunday, Oct. 9, 1796.

TO THE REVEREND

GEORGE GASKIN, D.D.

RECTOR OF ST. BENE'T GRACECHURCH.

DEAR SIR,

WHEN I delivered the following Discourse in your pulpit, I did not foresee that the audience would require me to print it. At the request of good people, I have already printed more sermons, and within a shorter time, than I intended or desired. The subject of this present one being almost as wide as the world of which it treats; I would have kept it awhile longer under my eye, for the chance

of some farther improvements: but if your Congregation are disposed to accept it in its present imperfect state, I ought to submit without scruple to their good intentions. On one account, I am pleased with the accident: it gives me a fair opportunity of expressing my regard and affection for *you*, who serve the Church at large, by dedicating your life, as Mr. *Broughton*, that eminent example of piety, did before you, to the *business* of Christianity, as well as to the other common offices of devotion and charity.

In return for the honour your Congregation have done me, I can wish them nothing better, than that they may distinguish wisely, and receive faithfully,

faithfully, the blessings they may derive from your ministry.

This Epistle is the smallest testimony due to your merits, from,

Reverend Sir,

Your affectionate Brother in Christ,

And humble Servant,

NAYLAND,
Nov. 10, 1796.

W. JONES.

SERMON XX

AND THEY THAT USE THIS WORLD AS NOT ABUSING IT. 1 COR. VII. 31.

TO distinguish properly between the use of this world, and the abuse of it, is the part of every wise man; and happy will it be for him, if, when he knows this distinction, he makes it a rule of action, which doing, it will seldom fail to direct him. How common is it for men to render their lives insignificant to others, and troublesome to themselves, for want of knowing, and observing this plain distinction! The life of man is, and will be, short, when we do our best; and it must be often disturbed, by the ways of other people, over whom we have no power: but after all, most of the evils which man finds in this

life, are of his own making. Natural and necessary evils may be great, but artificial evils are much greater: and so true is this, that if the case were properly related, with all circumstances, it would be generally found, that of those unhappy wretches, who drive themselves *out of the world*, the far greater number are brought to this extremity, by their abuse of it. They first spoil the world by their folly, then dislike it, and at last leave it in despair. Great effects often follow from little causes; on which account, the nature of effects and causes in human life should be minutely observed, that we may know how to avoid the beginnings of danger: and if we cannot be so great, or so happy, as we may be tempted to wish, we may at least not be the authors of our own misery.

There are so many plain matters of fact to prove what I say, that the subject before us may be seen, and understood, by every person that will cast his eye upon it. It will be therefore profitable for us to survey some of the chief of those things, which this world presents to us; and having considered what their natural and proper use is, according to the intention of Providence; then to compare the conduct of men in respect to them, and note

note the effect that conduct must necessarily have upon themselves. By this rule, we may examine ourselves, and others; and having done so, we shall see better what human life is, and be taught how to use it.

The first thing which this world presents to us, is *Time*, which God hath given to us all. To some he gives nobility; to others wealth; to others quickness of parts; but he gives Time to all. To have life is to have time, and time is given only for its use. It is divided into day and night: the day, being light, is intended for work and labour: and the night, being a time of darkness, is made for rest. All the useful creatures which God hath made, conform themselves to this division of their time. When the sun arises, the cattle go out to pasture; the birds of the air take wing in search of food. Even the flowers of the field open their eyes, to take advantage of the light, that shines upon them, and is bringing them to perfection. All creatures are well, and easy, when they follow this order of nature. The busy man that rises early to work, is cheerful in his mind; his family are living upon the fruits of his labour; and, according to the common course of things, his days will be prolonged upon the

earth. He that uses his time as he ought, will have most of it to use. A regular life is commonly a long life.

But now what is he that abuses his time? never happy; never truly at ease; but restless, because he is useless. If he be rich and idle, he can afford to turn night into day. When the night comes, nature would shut his eyes; but folly keeps them open: and what is contrary to nature cannot be without injury to the health and spirits. He that is busy in the night, must rest in the day: if he be a poor man, his affairs go to ruin; if he be a rich man, his health and mind suffer. With irregularity he loses his prudence, and with that he loses his fortune: for woe be to the man, who in a world of so much danger, is not careful to keep his head clear, and his wits about him. If the watchful man scarcely escapes, what must become of one who is stupid with sloth, or giddy with pleasure and dissipation? A regular orderly life is generally prolonged; an irregular life is shortened; and how often do we see, that he who lives in the world to no purpose, is sent out of it before his time!

The case is so plain with respect to the use and abuse of Time; that we may go on to

to another article; which shall be that of *wealth.*

What we call wealth has no intrinsic value of its own; it is valued for the sake of what it will procure; and when it procures nothing, it is worth nothing: but as its nature is, to *answer all things;* it gives us the command of all things. And what a noble opportunity is this! The rich man has the means of improving himself in wisdom, and knowledge; he can obtain all the information he desires: he can buy light; light for his mind to see by; while others of less ability are obliged to sit in their own darkness. This is one great purpose, for which wealth is bestowed; but it is not the only one: for wealth is given to *some* for the sake of *all.* God is no respecter of persons, but appoints some as his stewards and agents, for the benefit of others. On which consideration, no man has a right to consider himself as an absolute proprietor, with power to dispose of every thing he has, according to his own will. No: the Creator is the only proprietor, who is *possessor of heaven and earth:* and when man giveth to any, he resembles God, who giveth to all. Not he that *receives* most is the greatest, but he that *gives* most, because he

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is most like to God; which consideration alone is sufficient to prove, that it is *more blessed to give than to receive.* What a divine pleasure is it, to see others relieved in their wants, or gratified in their expectations, by any thing we have to bestow. The mind that delights in this, can find no higher or purer pleasure upon earth: and it is a pleasure that does not end with this world, but reaches to a better; it lays up treasure in heaven. Such is the use of wealth. But the abuse of it does great mischief: for as it furnishes an opportunity of more wisdom, when well used, its abuse corrupts the heart, breeds idleness, and nourishes folly. Instead of making others happy, it makes the possessor himself miserable: it puts him into a dangerous situation, by multiplying his temptations, and his opportunities of sin: so that it might well be said, *how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!* If he bestows that upon himself in wantonness, which he ought to bestow upon others; he becomes vain, selfish, and hard-hearted. Instead of being loved, he is hated: for nothing is more odious than pride and selfishness: and how must that man feel in his own mind, who is sensible that nobody loves him? All his wealth will never make

make him amends, for such a loss. Wealth is therefore (as you will find all other things to be) either good or bad, the means of happiness or misery, according to the use that is made of it.

This will appear farther, when we consider the use of meat and drink, for the support of man's life. To the hungry man, what a comfort it is to eat; and to the thirsty and faint, how pleasant it is to drink. Great reason, therefore, we have, especially in this plentiful season, to be thankful to the author of all good, when he gives us food sufficient for us. But for what end is it given? To enable us to carry on the necessary business of life; and that our support may be such as our work requires. This is the use of food: man eats and drinks that he may work: therefore the idle man forfeits his right to his daily bread; and the Apostle lays down a rule both just and natural; that *if any man will not work, neither should he eat.*

But no sooner do we fall into abuse and excess, than we are sure to suffer for it, in mind and in body; either with sickness, or ill-temper, or vicious inclinations; or with all of them at once. It is with men, as it is with cattle. If we feed a horse properly, he

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is able to work: if he be over-fed, he is high-spirited and kicks; and perhaps may break his own neck, as well as that of his rider. We may know how necessary moderate living is to the temper, if we observe how high living disposes the mind to riot and mischief. Besides; it has an effect directly contrary to its nature: for as man is enabled to work, by eating what is sufficient; he is hindered from working, and becomes heavy, idle, and stupid, if he takes too much. As to the bodily distempers, that are occasioned by excess, there is no end of them. How often do the limbs of men become useless, which were given that they might use them in their necessary occupations? Gluttony breeds apoplexy; drunkenness sometimes ends in a dropsy, or a fever, or even in fury and madness. By seeking too much enjoyment, we have no enjoyment at all. Ungovernable appetite leads to ungovernable passions: to a clouded understanding; to a miserable life; and often to a speedy death. When we use that gift of God to destroy us, which was intended to preserve us, then we are fools indeed.

Consider next what is the use of our *clothing?* It was intended, as its name signifies, in the first language of mankind, to cover shame.

shame. Another use of it, especially in such a climate as ours, is to protect us from the coldness of the air, and the roughness of the weather. It serves likewise as a mark, to distinguish the different orders, and degrees, amongst mankind. But soon enter vanity and fashion, and turn it all into absurdity. Fashion is so variable, that the study of it absolutely fills up the lives of some people; and helps to swallow up the fortunes of others. New fashions are continually arising; some of which are foolish and monstrous, and make the wearers ridiculous; others are so unnatural and inconvenient, that they make them uneasy: yet they must all be followed. To this foolish servitude, the world has given its sanction; and it is submitted to. So much thought is taken for the body, *what it shall put on*, that if we were to read the history of some people's lives, we should hear of nothing but of what they put on, and what they put off. The mind is little thought of: the putting off the *old man*, and the putting on of the *new man*, are subjects little studied, and little understood; though upon this alone depends our admission into the presence of God, and the fashion in which we must appear to all eternity.

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We have another matter to consider, which would require many words, if it were properly treated, and according to its importance: I mean, that society which God hath ordained of man and woman, for their mutual help and comfort in life. If this be according to the laws of God, it leads to happiness: if according to the laws of sin, it leads to misery and death. The estate of matrimony is wise, and holy, and honourable; and if it proves to be, what God designed it always should be, it is the most happy in the world. It was the state of man, in the time of his innocency: and even now innocency is gone, it is a relief under all the cares of life: poverty and labour are more tolerable: sickness is less afflicting; disappointments are diminished, and blessings are increased. All this is, or may be, true: and the profane jests of the libertine signify nothing. We argue with God on our side, and are in no fear of being mistaken. It is certain, that from a common relation to a family of children, a friendship arises out of matrimony, such as the world can never produce, from any other relation in life: and, as friendship is one of the first of blessings, so far as paradise can be recovered

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by us, in this state of mortality, it must be found here, or nowhere.

But, who can describe the miseries which arise from all abuses of the relation between the sexes? True and lawful society renders life innocent and happy: false society never fails to end in wretchedness, and corruption of every kind. For the *man*, if a libertine, has no real friend; such as he ought to have: he can never expect to find it in any partner of his iniquity. The *woman* has no protector, on whom she can depend; but is left to scorn, to beggary, to infamy, and wretchedness. How much there is of this wretchedness in the world, they only can tell, who are acquainted with the crooked paths of life; of which, honest men know but little. However, a great deal of it must be known to all mankind. In every place we need not go far for some shameful and wretched examples of vice and ruin: out of which, the hand of God may be able to save; but the hand of man cannot; because it is not in man's power to change a lost character. How can I say more in few words on the subject than this? that as matrimony is the institution of God, for man's good (perhaps for the salvation of his soul), so whoredom is the institution of the

the devil; for man's destruction in this world, and perhaps for his damnation in the next. How careful then ought we to be, to do all we can, by vigilance, by example, by discipline and correction, to save from ruin those who are going headlong to perdition; blinded by their passions, and corrupted by the licentiousness of the times, or the bad examples of the place wherein they live. They see not the gulph of misery into which they are hastening: they lose themselves; they lose the world; and they lose (which is the greatest of all calamities) the grace of God, and his favour; which is worse than the loss of life: and all this, by not following the commandment of God for the right use of the world. They that follow other commandments of their own lusts, may seem to be easy and happy under them, for a time; but that is no more than a bait; which the devil offers, when he means to have a lost soul in return.

As the states of men, so all their faculties, have their use and their abuse. How excellent is the use of speech, when applied to the instruction, admonition, or consolation of others! It is to the mind, what light, and medicine, and food, are to the body: it can enlighten the ignorant; feed the hungry; heal

heal the sick. In these cases, the speech of a man is like the voice of an angel from heaven. But, how shamefully is it misapplied; for corrupting the manners; for railing, for cursing, for blaspheming, and setting the world on fire. What should the idle, the ignorant, or the vicious man speak, when he has nothing good to speak upon? Lo, his talk degenerates into empty jesting, to provoke laughter; and to make those *merry*, whom he is not able to make *wise*. Though, in such a case, it be the speech of a man; it is but little better than the noise of a beast. When a beast uttereth its voice, the subject is that only, which it knoweth naturally: and the subjects, on which the natural man speaketh, are nearly the same; and then his speech is but little better than a brutish noise; sometimes it is worse; for beasts can neither curse man, nor blaspheme their maker.

Music, nearly allied to speech, is another faculty which man hath: and how noble is it, when it celebrates the praise and glory of God, or recommends lessons of wisdom to man; which was the use of it, in very ancient times. It calms the passions; inspires devotion; and raises the mind above itself; as if it were carried upon wings of air toward the

heaven above. It has therefore always been used in religious worship, by Christians, Jews, and Heathens. But how little and low is it, when applied in a light insipid form, to enervate the mind: or in songs of drunkards and debauchees, to inspire corruption of manners: to weaken the reason, and inflame the passions!

I might go on to shew the like as to many other particulars; but we have seen enough to convince us. Let us now ask; who gave us all things, but God? for which his name is ever to be praised: and he that gave them, has taught the use of them. When we follow his rules, we are like to do well, and are never disappointed: the world is then to *us*, what it might be to *all:* for godliness hath the promise of this life, and of that which is to come: it is not more surely the way to glory above, than to peace and comfort below. Who is it that leads us into the *abuse* of all things, but the devil; whose pride and malice have no delight, but in spoiling, perverting, and defacing, the works and the gifts of God? If man observes the laws of God, they give to him, and to the world, an alliance with heaven: but the laws of the devil infuse the poison of hell into all the comforts upon earth;

earth; and create torments in the present time, which are preparatory to those of eternity.

If I were to meet with two men, one of whom uses the world, while the other abuses it; and both these characters were complete in their kind; I would shew them to you: but if we cannot find them, let us form them. Before they are known, we may affirm of them in general, that the one is a wise man, and the other a fool. The wise follows the order which God hath appointed in the use of his *time:* he works with the light, he rests with the darkness; his time is therefore of its natural value; and the regularity of it gives a habit of activity and chearfulness to his mind. His *wealth,* when it has supplied his own wants, supplies the wants of others; and brings down, upon his head, the blessings of the widow and the fatherless. He *clothes* not himself for vanity and shew, but for decency and convenience: he can therefore afford to put clothes upon the naked. He *eats* and *drinks* for health and refreshment; and his wits are always with him. As he feeds not to excess, he can spare something to feed the hungry. If he be the father of a family; he is their friend and protector; he looks upon

them with kindness and affection; and they look up to him with gratitude and delight. His *speech* is with grace; and his words are the words of truth and soberness; the ignorant derive light from it, and the afflicted help and comfort. Hymns and psalms give calmness and sweetness to his mind; and when God is exalted, he is lifted toward heaven; which place he will reach at last; for his charities and his affections went thither before him.

Such may be, and such, by the blessing of God, hath been the life and the end of many a wise man: but what is the other? what is the servant of sin? He begins with folly, and ends with misery. His time has neither order nor value: a thousand years of such time would be worth nothing. His object is pleasure; but he is always out of the road: for an *unnatural* world can never prove to be a *pleasant* world. His wealth is devoured by himself; or lost and squandered away upon hawks and harpies; who would tear the flesh off his bones, and never thank him, for any thing they get by him. By eating, or drinking to excess, his understanding is darkened; his body is distempered; and his life is cut short. The ill company he keeps at home,

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by their faithlessness and ingratitude, disappoint him, distress him, and ruin him: and, in the end, he treats them, and they treat him, with mutual curses and accusations. As to his conversation, the best of it is seasoned with foolish jesting, and the worst of it is poisoned with blasphemy. His music is the noise of intoxication; it gives glory to vice and folly; and his mirth is the crackling of thorns under a pot, which consume themselves with their own blaze. When he has done what mischief he can to himself and others, he comes to his last hour; but there is no comfort to be found! a dreadful gulph is before him; God hath not been in all his thoughts: the world which he abused is going from him; and a worse is coming; toward which, every step of his life was leading him; but he saw not the end.

The two men I have now been describing appear like the inhabitants of two different worlds. They certainly belong to two classes of beings; the first to the *children of light;* the other to the poor disappointed children of this world, who *love darkness rather than light.*

Methinks I hear some of you cry out, "What would I give to be like the first of these

these men?" And hath not God called you for this very end, and taught you *how* to be like him; and promised to assist you, in the *endeavour* to make yourself like him? If you dread the other character, hath not God taught you how to avoid it? Has he not forewarned you of the *deceitfulness of sin;* what a cheat it is; and how it betrays into certain misery? Conquered you may be; but you never can be taken by surprize, when you have had so many warnings.

You may now see by example, that man is the maker of most evils; far the greater part are occasioned by the abuse of this world; and they are in most danger of abusing it, who have most of it in their possession. Men look up to them with admiration for what they have got, and praise the happiness of their situation; but, unless they have wisdom along with their riches, they are to be pitied, rather than envied, for their temptations and dangers. The poor man has not so much to fear, yet *he* can find ways of abusing the world to his own ruin: so that all men, rich and poor, should learn in time, what it is to use it wisely: if they do not, they see the consequence; the whole subject has been reduced to matter of fact.

And now, who can behold, without sorrow of heart, what man *is*, when it is considered what he *might* be! But how dreadful does the case become, when it is added, that man has but *one* life to live in this world; if he throws *that* away, there is no second trial: he never returns to correct his mistake; he is never permitted to try the world over again; and if he were to try it a thousand times, he would always miscarry, if he is not with God, and God is not with him.

Thrice happy, then, is he, who looking up to God, and following his rules, and depending upon his protection, is in the way of deliverance: who, looking upon the world as a wide ocean, sees others tossed in the storm, while his own feet are upon firm land; who, having used this world according to the sense of the Apostle in the text, shall be admitted to the use of a better, where there shall be neither abuses nor offences, but righteousness and peace without end, and without interruption.

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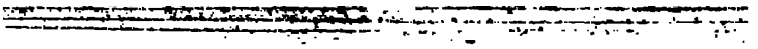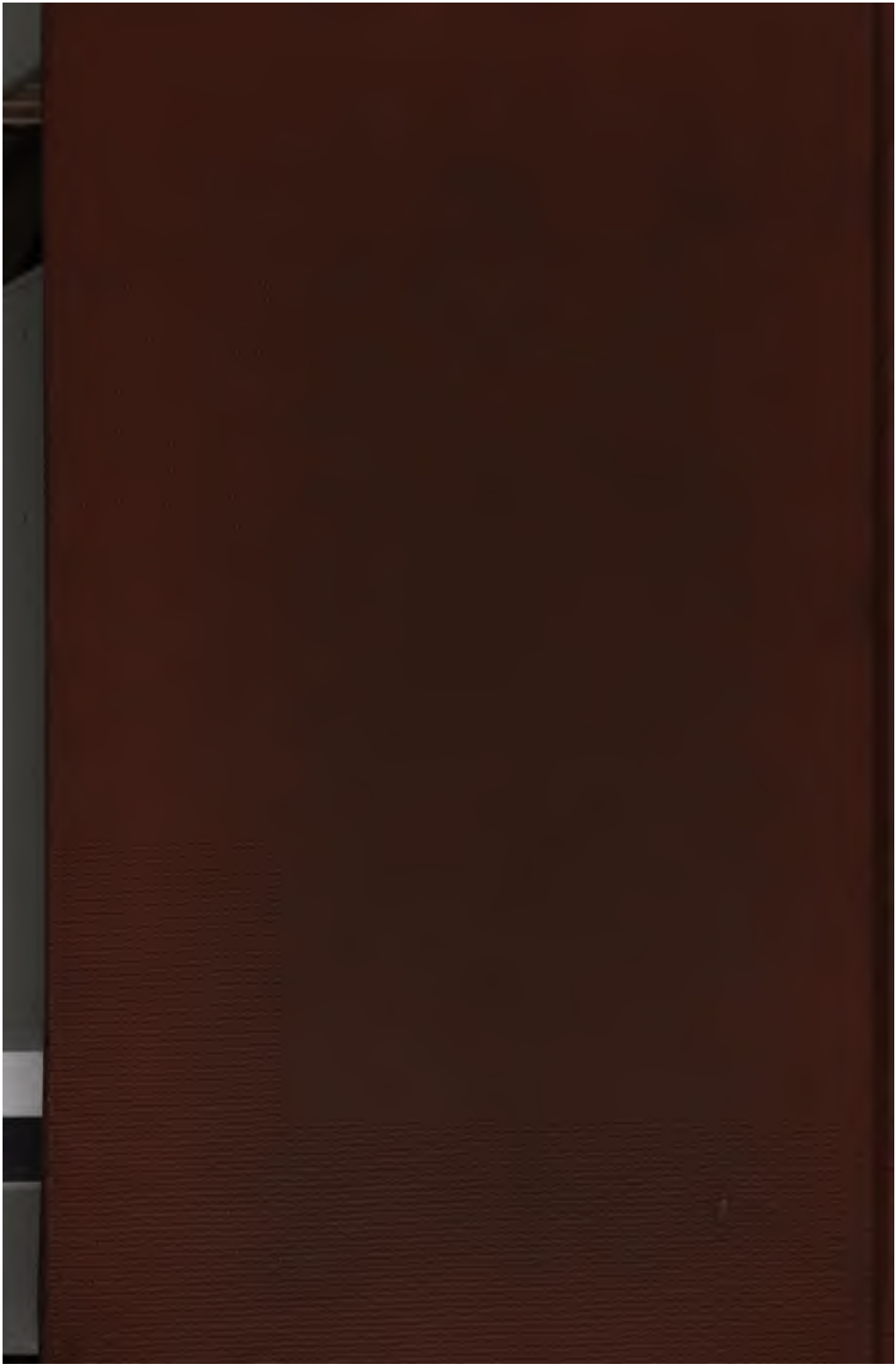
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